Can Longfellow, Henry L.

Number 18

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FROM
Longfellow

EDITED WITH NOTES BY
JOHN C. SAUL, M.A.

TORONTO
MORANG & CO. LIMITED
1906

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PS2252
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1906
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BIOGRAPHICAL OUTLINE

1807. February 27th. Born at Portland, Me.

1821. Entered Bowdoin College. Wrote *The Battle of Lovell's Pond*, his first published poem. Wrote for *The United States Literary Gazette.*

1825. Graduated. Entered his father's law office.

1826. Sent to Europe by the College to fit him for the new chair of Modern Languages.

1827. Toured in Spain.

1828. Toured in Italy.

1829. Entered upon the professorship of Modern Languages at Bowdoin.

1831. Married Mary Storer Porter.

1833. *Essay on the Moral and Devotional Poetry of Spain.*

1835. *Outre Mer*, in imitation of Irving. Essays in *The North American Review.* Elected to the chair of Modern Languages at Harvard University. Tour in Denmark, Sweden and Switzerland. Death of his wife at Rotterdam.

1836. Entered upon his professorship at Harvard.

1839. *Hyperion, a Romance*, after the style of Richter. *Voices of the Night*, in which Longfellow for the first time showed that simplicity, tenderness and pathos which won the common heart.

1841. Went to Europe for a year.

1842. *Ballads and Other Poems. Poems on Slavery*, influenced by Dickens' strong anti-slavery views.

1843. *The Spanish Student.* Married Frances Elizabeth Appleton.
1845. *The Poets and Poetry of Europe.* Bought Craigie House, Cambridge, famous in early Colonial history.
1846. *The Belfry of Bruges and Other Poems.*
1847. *Evangeline.*
1849. *Kavanagh: A Tale,* much praised by Emerson and Lowell, but very unsuccessful.
1850. *The Seaside and the Fireside.*
1851. *The Golden Legend.*
1854. Resigned his chair at Harvard.
1855. *The Song of Hiawatha.*
1858. *The Courtship of Miles Standish.*
1861. His wife died from the effects of severe burns.
1863. *Tales of a Wayside Inn.*
1866. *Flower de Luce.*
1867-70. Poetical translation of Dante's *The Divine Comedy.*
1868. Went to Europe for a year. Received degree of D.C.L. from Oxford.
1869. *New England Tragedies.*
1871. *The Divine Tragedy.*
1872. *Three Books of Song.*
1874. *Aftermath.* Received vote for lord rectorship of University of Edinburgh.
1875. *The Masque of Pandora.*
1878. *Keramos.*
1880. *Ultima Thule.*
1882. *In the Harbour.* Died at Cambridge March 24th.
1883. *Michael Angelo.*

LONGFELLOW

THE CHILDREN'S HOUR

Between the dark and the daylight,
When the night is beginning to lower,
Comes a pause in the day's occupations,
That is known as the Children's Hour.

I hear in the chamber above me
The patter of little feet,
The sound of a door that is opened,
And voices soft and sweet.

From my study I see in the lamplight,
Descending the broad hall stair,
Grave Alice, and laughing Allegra,
And Edith with golden hair.

A whisper, and then a silence:
Yet I know by their merry eyes,
They are plotting and planning together
To take me by surprise.

A sudden rush from the stairway,
A sudden raid from the hall!
By three doors left unguarded,
They enter my castle wall!

They climb up into my turret,
O'er the arms and back of my chair;
If I try to escape they surround me;
They seem to be everywhere.

They almost devour me with kisses,
Their arms about me entwine,
Till I think of the Bishop of Bingen[1]
In his Mouse-Tower on the Rhine!

Do you think, O blue-eyed banditti,
Because you have scaled the wall,
Such an old moustache as I am
Is not a match for you all?

I have you fast in my fortress,
And will not let you depart,
But put you down into the dungeon
In the round-tower of my heart.

And there will I keep you forever,
Yes, forever and a day,
Till the walls shall crumble to ruin,
And moulder in dust away!

THE VILLAGE BLACKSMITH

UNDER a spreading chestnut-tree[2]
The village smithy stands;
The smith, a mighty man is he,
With large and sinewy hands;
And the muscles of his brawny arms
Are strong as iron bands.

[1] **Bishop of Bingen**—Bishop Hatto, who, during a severe famine, invited the poor of the neighbourhood to assemble in a large barn, in order that he might feed them. When the barn was filled, he shut the doors and set fire to the building. As a punishment for this crime the Bishop was devoured by an army of mice or rats who invaded his castle on the Rhine.

[2] **Chestnut-tree**—This tree was cut down in 1876. From a portion of the wood a chair was made, which was presented to Longfellow on his seventy-second birthday by the children of Cambridge.

His hair is crisp, and black, and long,
His face is like the tan;
His brow is wet with honest sweat,
He earns whate'er he can,
And looks the whole world in the face,
For he owes not any man.

Week in, week out, from morn till night,
You can hear his bellows blow;
You can hear him swing his heavy sledge,
With measured beat and slow,
Like a sexton ringing the village bell,
When the evening sun is low.

And children coming home from school
Look in at the open door;
They love to see the flaming forge,
And hear the bellows roar,
And catch the burning sparks that fly
Like chaff from a threshing-floor.

He goes on Sunday to the church,
And sits among his boys;
He hears the parson pray and preach,
He hears his daughter's voice,
Singing in the village choir,
And it makes his heart rejoice.

It sounds to him like her mother's voice,
Singing in Paradise!
He needs must think of her once more,
How in the grave she lies;
And with his hard, rough hand he wipes
A tear out of his eyes.

Toiling,—rejoicing,—sorrowing,
Onward through life he goes;
Each morning sees some task begin,
Each evening sees it close;
Something attempted, something done,
Has earned a night's repose.

Thanks, thanks to thee, my worthy friend,
For the lesson thou hast taught!
Thus at the flaming forge of life
Our fortunes must be wrought;
Thus on its sounding anvil shaped
Each burning deed and thought.

EXCELSIOR

The shades of night were falling fast,
As through an Alpine village passed
A youth, who bore, 'mid snow and ice,
A banner with the strange device,
Excelsior!

His brow was sad; his eye beneath
Flashed like a falchion from its sheath,
And like a silver clarion rung
The accents of that unknown tongue,
Excelsior!

In happy homes he saw the light
Of household fires gleam warm and bright;
Above, the spectral glaciers shone,
And from his lips escaped a groan
Excelsior!

"Try not the Pass!" the old man said;
"Dark lowers the tempest overhead,

The roaring torrent is deep and wide!"
And loud that clarion voice replied,
Excelsior!

"Oh stay," the maiden said, "and rest
Thy weary head upon this breast!"
A tear stood in his bright blue eye,
But still he answered, with a sigh,
Excelsior!

"Beware the pine-tree's withered branch!
Beware the awful avalanche!"
This was the peasant's last Good-night,
A voice replied, far up the height,
Excelsior!

At break of day, as heavenward
The pious monks of Saint Bernard[1]
Uttered the oft-repeated prayer,
A voice cried through the startled air,
Excelsior!

A traveller, by the faithful hound,
Half-buried in the snow was found,
Still grasping in his hand of ice
That banner with the strange device,
Excelsior!

There in the twilight cold and gray,
Lifeless, but beautiful, he lay,
And from the sky, serene and far,
A voice fell, like a falling star,
Excelsior!

[1] **Saint Bernard**—A French monk who was celebrated during the second Crusade. The monastery of St. Bernard in the Alps is famous for the assistance that the monks give to travellers. The monks are aided in their work of rescue by their faithful dogs.

THE WRECK OF THE HESPERUS

It was the schooner Hesperus,
That sailed the wintry sea;
And the skipper had taken his little daughter,
To bear him company.

Blue were her eyes as the fairy-flax,
Her cheeks like the dawn of day,
And her bosom white as the hawthorn buds,
That ope in the month of May.

The skipper he stood beside the helm,
His pipe was in his mouth,
And he watched how the veering flaw did blow
The smoke now West, now South.

Then up and spake an old Sailor,
Had sailed the Spanish Main,[1]
"I pray thee, put into yonder port,
For I fear a hurricane.

"Last night, the moon had a golden ring,
And to-night no moon we see!"
The skipper, he blew a whiff from his pipe,
And a scornful laugh laughed he.

Colder and louder blew the wind,
A gale from the Northeast,
The snow fell hissing in the brine,
And the billows frothed like yeast.

Down came the storm, and smote amain
The vessel in its strength;
She shuddered and paused, like a frighted steed,
Then leaped her cable's length.

[1] **Spanish Main**—The coast along the northern part of South America, but the word is frequently taken to refer to the sea in that vicinity.

"Come hither! come hither! my little daughter,
And do not tremble so;
For I can weather the roughest gale
That ever wind did blow."

He wrapped her warm in his seaman's coat
Against the stinging blast;
He cut a rope from a broken spar,
And bound her to the mast.

"O father! I hear the church-bells ring,
Oh say, what may it be?"
"'T is a fog-bell on a rock-bound coast!"—
And he steered for the open sea.

"O father! I hear the sound of guns,
Oh say, what may it be?"
"Some ship in distress, that cannot live
In such an angry sea!"

"O father! I see a gleaming light,
Oh say, what may it be?"
But the father answered never a word,
A frozen corpse was he.

Lashed to the helm, all stiff and stark,
With his face turned to the skies,
The lantern gleamed through the gleaming snow
On his fixed and glassy eyes.

Then the maiden clasped her hands and prayed
That saved she might be;
And she thought of Christ, who stilled the wave,
On the Lake of Galilee.

And fast through the midnight dark and drear,
Through the whistling sleet and snow,
Like a sheeted ghost, the vessel swept
Tow'rds the reef of Norman's Woe.[1]

And ever the fitful gusts between
A sound came from the land;
It was the sound of the trampling surf
On the rocks and the hard sea-sand.

The breakers were right beneath her bows,
She drifted a dreary wreck,
And a whooping billow swept the crew
Like icicles from her deck.

She struck where the white and fleecy waves
Looked soft as carded wool,
But the cruel rocks, they gored her side
Like the horns of an angry bull.

Her rattling shrouds, all sheathed in ice,
With the masts went by the board;
Like a vessel of glass, she stove and sank,
Ho! ho! the breakers roared!

At daybreak, on the bleak sea-beach,
A fisherman stood aghast,
To see the form of a maiden fair,
Lashed close to a drifting mast.

The salt sea was frozen on her breast,
The salt tears in her eyes;
And he saw her hair, like the brown sea-weed,
On the billows fall and rise.

[1] **Norman's Woe**—A reef off the coast of Massachusetts.

Such was the wreck of the Hesperus,
In the midnight and the snow!
Christ save us all from a death like this,
On the reef of Norman's Woe!

THE LUCK OF EDENHALL

Of Edenhall, the youthful Lord
Bids sound the festal trumpet's call;
He rises at the banquet board,
And cries, 'mid the drunken revellers all,
"Now bring me the Luck of Edenhall!"

The butler hears the words with pain,
The house's oldest seneschal,
Takes slow from its silken cloth again
The drinking-glass of crystal tall
They call it The Luck of Edenhall.

Then said the Lord: "This glass to praise,
Fill with red wine from Portugal!"
The greybeard with trembling hand obeys;
A purple light shines over all,
It beams from the Luck of Edenhall.

Then speaks the Lord, and waves it light:
"This glass of flashing crystal tall
Gave to my sires the Fountain-Sprite;
She wrote in it, *If this glass doth fall,*
Farewell then, O Luck of Edenhall!

"'Twas right a goblet the Fate should be
Of the joyous race of Edenhall!
Deep draughts drink we right willingly;
And willingly ring, with merry call,
Kling! Klang! to the Luck of Edenhall!"

First rings it deep, and full and mild,
Like to the song of a nightingale;
Then like the roar of a torrent wild;
Then mutters at last like the thunder's fall,
The glorious Luck of Edenhall.

"For its keeper takes a race of might,
The fragile goblet of crystal tall;
It has lasted longer than is right;
Kling! klang! with a harder blow than all
Will I try the Luck of Edenhall!"

As the goblet ringing flies apart,
Suddenly cracks the vaulted hall;
And through the rift, the wild flames start;
The guests in dust are scattered all,
With the breaking Luck of Edenhall!

In storms the foe, with fire and sword;
He in the night had scaled the wall
Slain by the sword lies the youthful Lord,
But holds in his hand the crystal tall,
The shattered Luck of Edenhall.

On the morrow the butler gropes alone,
The greybeard in the desert hall,
He seeks his Lord's burnt skeleton,
He seeks in the dismal ruin's fall
The shards of the Luck of Edenhall.

"The stone wall," saith he, "doth fall aside,
Down must the stately columns fall;
Glass is this earth's Luck and Pride;
In atoms shall fall this earthly ball
One day like the Luck of Edenhall."

CHRISTMAS BELLS

I HEARD the bells on Christmas Day
Their old, familiar carols play,
And wild and sweet
The words repeat
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!

And thought how, as the day had come,
The belfries of all Christendom
Had rolled along
The unbroken song
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!

Till, ringing, singing on its way,
The world revolved from night to day,
A voice, a chime,
A chant sublime
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!

Then from each black, accursed mouth
The cannon thundered in the south,[1]
And with the sound
The carols drowned
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!

It was as if an earthquake rent
The hearth-stones of a continent,
And made forlorn
The households born
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!

[1] **In the south**—This poem was written in 1864 while the war between the Northern and Southern States was in progress.

And in despair I bowed my head;
"There is no peace on earth," I said,
"For hate is strong,
And mocks the song
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!"

Then pealed the bells more loud and deep:
"God is not dead; nor doth He sleep!
The Wrong shall fail,
The Right prevail,
With peace on earth, good-will to men!"

WOODS IN WINTER

When winter winds are piercing chill,
And through the hawthorn blows the gale,
With solemn feet I tread the hill,
That overbrows the lonely vale.

O'er the bare upland, and away
Through the long reach of desert woods,
The embracing sunbeams chastely play,
And gladden these deep solitudes.

Where, twisted round the barren oak,
The summer vine in beauty clung,
And summer winds the stillness broke,
The crystal icicle is hung.

Where, from their frozen urns, mute springs
Pour out the river's gradual tide,
Shrilly the skater's iron rings,
And voices fill the woodland side.

Alas! how changed from the fair scene,
When birds sang out their mellow lay,
And winds were soft, and woods were green,
And the song ceased not with the day!

But still wild music is abroad,
Pale, desert woods! within your crowd;
And gathering winds, in hoarse accord,
Amid the vocal reeds pipe loud.

Chill airs and wintry winds! my ear
Has grown familiar with your song;
I hear it in the opening year,
I listen, and it cheers me long.

THE OLD CLOCK ON THE STAIRS

SOMEWHAT back from the village street
Stands the old-fashioned country-seat.[1]
Across its antique portico
Tall poplar-trees their shadows throw;
And from its station in the hall
An ancient timepiece says to all,—
"Forever—never!
Never—forever!"

Half-way up the stairs it stands,
And points and beckons with its hands
From its case of massive oak,
Like a monk, who, under his cloak,
Crosses himself, and sighs, alas!
With sorrowful voice to all who pass,—
"Forever—never!
Never—forever!"

[1]**Country-seat**—The Gold house in Pittsfield, Massachusetts, the home of Mrs. Longfellow's grandfather.

By day its voice is low and light;
But in the silent dead of night,
Distinct as a passing footstep's fall,
It echoes along the vacant hall,
Along the ceiling, along the floor,
And seems to say, at each chamber-door,-
"Forever—never!
Never—forever!"

Through days of sorrow and of mirth,
Through days of death and days of birth,
Through every swift vicissitude
Of changeful time, unchanged it has stood,
And as if, like God, it all things saw,
It calmly repeats those words of awe,—
"Forever—never!
Never—forever!"

In that mansion used to be
Free-hearted Hospitality;
His great fires up the chimney roared;
The stranger feasted at his board;
But, like the skeleton at the feast,[1]
That warning timepiece never ceased,—
"Forever—never!
Never—forever!"

There groups of merry children played,
There youths and maidens dreaming strayed;
O precious hours! O golden prime,
And affluence of love and time!
Even as a miser counts his gold,

[1] **Skeleton at the feast**—Towards the close of the feasts among the ancient Egyptians it was customary to have a skeleton brought into the room. A servant at the same time called out: "Look on this! Eat, drink and be merry, for to-morrow you die."

Those hours the ancient timepiece told,—
"Forever—never!
Never—forever!"

From that chamber, clothed in white,
The bride came forth on her wedding night;
There, in that silent room below,
The dead lay in his shroud of snow;
And in the hush that followed the prayer,
Was heard the old clock on the stair,—
"Forever—never!
Never—forever!"

All are scattered now and fled,
Some are married, some are dead:
And when I ask, with throbs of pain,
"Ah! when shall they all meet again?"
As in the days long since gone by,
The ancient timepiece makes reply,—
"Forever—never!
Never—forever!"

Never here, forever there,
Where all parting, pain, and care,
And death, and time shall disappear,—
Forever there, but never here!
The horologe[1] of Eternity
Sayeth this incessantly,—
"Forever—never!
Never—forever!"

THE SERMON OF ST. FRANCIS

Up soared the lark into the air,
A shaft of song, a winged prayer,
As if a soul, released from pain,
Were flying back to heaven again.

[1] **Horologe**—Clock.

St. Francis[1] heard; it was to him
An emblem of the Seraphim;
The upward motion of the fire,
The light, the heat, the heart's desire.

Around Assisi's convent gate
The birds, God's poor who cannot wait,
From moor and mere and darksome wood
Came flocking for their dole of food.

"O brother birds," St. Francis said,
"Ye come to me and ask for bread,
But not with bread alone to-day
Shall ye be fed and sent away.

"Ye shall be fed, ye happy birds,
With manna of celestial words;
Not mine, though mine they seem to be,
Not mine, though they be spoken through me.

"O, doubly are ye bound to praise
The great Creator in your lays;
He giveth you your plumes of dawn,
Your crimson hoods, your cloaks of brown.

"He giveth you your wings to fly
And breathe a purer air on high,
And careth for you everywhere,
Who for yourselves so little care!"

With flutter of swift wings and songs
Together rose the feathered throngs
And singing scattered far apart;
Deep peace was in St. Francis' heart.

[1] **St. Francis**—The founder of the Franciscans or Gray Friars. His love for the birds and beasts has become proverbial.

He knew not if the brotherhood
His homily had understood;
He only knew that to one ear
The meaning of his words was clear.

BURIAL OF THE MINNISINK

On sunny slope and beechen swell,
The shadowed light of evening fell;
And, where the maple's leaf was brown,
With soft and silent lapse came down,
The glory, that the wood receives,
At sunset, in its golden leaves.

Far upward in the mellow light
Rose the blue hills. One cloud of white,
Around a far uplifted cone,
In the warm blush of evening shone;
An image of the silver lakes,
By which the Indian's soul awakes.

But soon a funeral hymn was heard
Where the soft breath of evening stirred
The tall, gray forest; and a band
Of stern in heart, and strong in hand,
Came winding down beside the wave,
To lay the red chief in his grave.

They sang, that by his native bowers
He stood, in the last moon of flowers,
And thirty snows had not yet shed
Their glory on the warrior's head;
But, as the summer fruit decays,
So died he in those naked days.

A dark cloak of the roebuck's skin
Covered the warrior, and within
Its heavy folds the weapons, made
For the hard toils of war, were laid;
The cuirass, woven of plaited reeds,
And the broad belt of shells and beads.

Before, a dark-haired virgin train
Chanted the death dirge of the slain;
Behind, the long procession came
Of hoary men and chiefs of fame,
With heavy hearts, and eyes of grief,
Leading the war-horse of their chief.

Stripped of his proud and martial dress,
Uncurbed, unreined, and riderless,
With darting eye, and nostril spread,
And heavy and impatient tread,
He came; and oft that eye so proud
Asked for his rider in the crowd.

They buried the dark chief; they freed
Beside his grave his battle steed;
And swift an arrow cleaved its way
To his stern heart! One piercing neigh
Arose, and, on the dead man's plain,
The rider grasps his steed again.

THE BELL OF ATRI

At Atri in Abruzzo, a small town
Of ancient Roman date, but scant renown,
One of those little places that have run
Half up the hill, beneath a blazing sun,
And then sat down to rest, as if to say,
"I climb no farther upward, come what may,"—

The Re Giovanni, now unknown to fame,
So many monarchs since have borne the name,
Had a great bell hung in the market-place,
Beneath a roof, projecting some small space
By way of shelter from the sun and rain.
Then rode he through the streets with all his train,
And, with the blast of trumpets loud and long,
Made proclamation, that whenever wrong
Was done to any man, he should but ring
The great bell in the square, and he, the King,
Would cause the Syndic to decide thereon.
Such was the proclamation of King John.

How swift the happy days in Atri sped,
What wrongs were righted, need not here be said.
Suffice it that, as all things must decay,
The hempen rope at length was worn away,
Unravelled at the end, and, strand by strand,
Loosened and wasted in the ringer's hand,
Till one, who noted this in passing by,
Mended the rope with braids of briony,
So that the leaves and tendrils of the vine
Hung like a votive garland [1] at a shrine.

By chance it happened that in Atri dwelt
A knight, with spur on heel and sword in belt,
Who loved to hunt the wild-boar in the woods,
Who loved his falcons with their crimson hoods,
Who loved his hounds and horses, and all sports
And prodigalities of camps and courts;—
Loved, or had loved them; for at last, grown old,
His only passion was the love of gold.
He sold his horses, sold his hawks and hounds,
Rented his vineyards and his garden-grounds,
Kept but one steed, his favourite steed of all,

[1] **Votive garland**—A wreath of flowers hung before a shrine in pursuance of a vow.

To starve and shiver in a naked stall,
And day by day sat brooding in his chair,
Devising plans how best to hoard and spare.

At length he said: "What is the use or need
To keep at my own cost this lazy steed,
Eating his head off in my stables here,
When rents are low and provender is dear?
Let him go feed upon the public ways;
I want him only for the holidays."
So the old steed was turned into the heat
Of the long, lonely, silent, shadeless street;
And wandered in suburban lanes forlorn,
Barked at by dogs, and torn by brier and thorn.

One afternoon, as in that sultry clime
It is the custom in the summer time,
With bolted doors and window-shutters closed,
The inhabitants of Atri slept or dozed;
When suddenly upon their senses fell
The loud alarm of the accusing bell!
The Syndic started from his deep repose,
Turned on his couch, and listened, and then rose
And donned his robes, and with reluctant pace
Went panting forth into the market-place,
Where the great bell upon its cross-beam swung,
Reiterating with persistent tongue,
In half-articulate jargon, the old song:
"Some one hath done a wrong, hath done a wrong!"

But ere he reached the belfry's light arcade
He saw, or thought he saw, beneath its shade,
No shape of human form of woman born,
But a poor steed dejected and forlorn,
Who with uplifted head and eager eye
Was tugging at the vines of briony.

"Domeneddio!"[1] cried the Syndic straight,
"This is the Knight of Atri's steed of state!
He calls for justice, being sore distressed,
And pleads his cause as loudly as the best."

Meanwhile from street and lane a noisy crowd
Had rolled together like a summer cloud,
And told the story of the wretched beast
In five-and-twenty different ways at least,
With much gesticulation and appeal
To heathen gods, in their excessive zeal.
The Knight was called and questioned; in reply
Did not confess the fact, did not deny;
Treated the matter as a pleasant jest,
And set at naught the Syndic and the rest,
Maintaining, in an angry undertone,
That he should do what pleased him with his own.

And thereupon the Syndic gravely read
The proclamation of the King; then said:
"Pride goeth forth on horseback grand and gay,
But cometh back on foot, and begs its way;
Fame is the fragrance of heroic deeds,
Of flowers of chivalry and not of weeds!
These are familiar proverbs; but I fear
They never yet have reached your knightly ear.
What fair renown, what honour, what repute
Can come to you from starving this poor brute?
He who serves well and speaks not, merits more
Than they who clamour loudest at the door.
Therefore the law decrees that as this steed
Served you in youth, henceforth you shall take heed
To comfort his old age, and to provide
Shelter in stall, and food and field beside."

[1] **Domeneddio**—An Italian exclamation of surprise.

The Knight withdrew abashed; the people all
Led home the steed in triumph to his stall.
The King heard and approved, and laughed in glee
And cried aloud: "Right well it pleaseth me!
Church-bells at best but ring us to the door;
But go not in to mass; my bell doth more:
It cometh into court and pleads the cause
Of creatures dumb and unknown to the laws:
And this shall make, in every Christian clime,
The Bell of Atri famous for all time."

THE BRIDGE

I stood on the bridge[1] at midnight,
As the clocks were striking the hour,
And the moon rose o'er the city,
Behind the dark church-tower.

I saw her bright reflection
In the waters under me,
Like a golden goblet falling
And sinking into the sea.

And far in the hazy distance
Of that lovely night in June,
The blaze of the flaming furnace
Gleamed redder than the moon.

Among the long, black rafters
The wavering shadows lay,
And the current that came from the ocean
Seemed to lift and bear them away;

[1] **The bridge**—The bridge over the Charles River, connecting Boston and Cambridge.

As, sweeping and eddying through them,
Rose the belated tide,
And, streaming into the moonlight,
The seaweed floated wide.

And like those waters rushing
Among the wooden piers,
A flood of thoughts came o'er me
That filled my eyes with tears.

How often, oh how often,
In the days that had gone by,
I had stood on that bridge at midnight
And gazed on that wave and sky!

How often, oh how often,
I had wished that the ebbing tide
Would bear me away on its bosom
O'er the ocean wild and wide!

For my heart was hot and restless,
And my life was full of care,
And the burden laid upon me
Seemed greater than I could bear.

But now it has fallen from me,
It is buried in the sea;
And only the sorrow of others
Throws its shadow over me.

Yet whenever I cross the river
On its bridge with wooden piers,
Like the odour of brine from the ocean
Comes the thought of other years.

And I think how many thousands
Of care-encumbered men,
Each bearing his burden of sorrow,
Have crossed the bridge since then.

I see the long procession
Still passing to and fro,
The young heart hot and restless,
And the old subdued and slow!

And forever and forever,
As long as the river flows,
As long as the heart has passions,
As long as life has woes;

The moon and its broken reflection
And its shadows shall appear,
As the symbol of love in heaven,
And its wavering image here.

GASPAR BECERRA [1]

By his evening fire the artist
Pondered o'er his secret shame;
Baffled, weary, and disheartened,
Still he mused, and dreamed of fame.

'Twas an image of the Virgin
That had tasked his utmost skill;
But alas! his fair ideal
Vanished and escaped him still.

From a distant Eastern island
Had the precious wood been brought;
Day and night the anxious master
At his toil untiring wrought;

[1] **Becerra**—A Spanish painter.

Till, discouraged and despondling,
Sat he now in shadows deep,
And the day's humiliation
Found oblivion in sleep.

Then a voice cried, "Rise, O master!
From the burning brand of oak
Shape the thought that stirs within thee!"
And the startled artist woke,—

Woke, and from the smoking embers
Seized and quenched the glowing wood;
And therefrom he carved an image,
And he saw that it was good.

O thou sculptor, painter, poet!
Take this lesson to thy heart:
That is best which lieth nearest;
Shape from that thy work of art.

THE DISCOVERER OF THE NORTH CAPE

Othere, the old sea-captain,
Who dwelt in Helgoland,
To King Alfred,[1] the Lover of Truth,
Brought a snow-white walrus-tooth,
Which he held in his brown right hand.

His figure was tall and stately,
Like a boy's his eye appeared;
His hair was yellow as hay,
But threads of a silver gray
Gleamed in his tawny beard.

Hearty and hale was Othere,
His cheek had the colour of oak;

[1] **King Alfred**—Alfred the Great.

With a kind of a laugh in his speech,
Like the sea-tide on a beach,
As unto the King he spoke.

And Alfred, King of the Saxons,
Had a book upon his knees,
And wrote down the wondrous tale
Of him who was first to sail
Into the Arctic seas.

"So far I live to the northward,
No man lives north of me;
To the east are wild mountain-chains,
And beyond them meres and plains;
To the westward all is sea.

"So far I live to the northward,
From the harbour of Skeringes-hale,
If you only sailed by day,
With a fair wind all the way,
More than a month would you sail.

"I own six hundred reindeer,
With sheep and swine beside;
I have tribute from the Finns,
Whalebone and reindeer-skins,
And ropes of walrus-hide.

"I ploughed the land with horses,
But my heart was ill at ease,
For the old seafaring men
Came to me now and then,
With their sagas of the seas;—

"Of Iceland and of Greenland,
And the stormy Hebrides,
And the undiscovered deep;—

Oh I could not eat nor sleep
For thinking of those seas.

"To the northward stretched the desert
How far I fain would know;
So at last I sallied forth,
And three days sailed due north,
As far as the whale-ships go.

"To the west of me was the ocean,
To the right the desolate shore,
But I did not slacken sail
For the walrus or the whale,
Till after three days more.

"The days grew longer and longer,
Till they became as one,
And northward through the haze
I saw the sullen blaze
Of the red midnight sun.

"And then uprose before me,
Upon the water's edge,
The huge and haggard shape
Of that unknown North Cape,
Whose form is like a wedge.

"The sea was rough and stormy,
The tempest howled and wailed,
And the sea-fog, like a ghost,
Haunted that dreary coast,
But onward still I sailed.

"Four days I steered to eastward,
Four days without a night:
Round in a fiery ring

Went the great sun, O King,
With red and lurid light."

Here Alfred, King of the Saxons,
Ceased writing for a while;
And raised his eyes from his book,
With a strange and puzzled look,
And an incredulous smile.

But Othere, the old sea-captain,
He neither paused nor stirred,
Till the King listened and then
Once more took up his pen,
And wrote down every word.

"And now the land," said Othere,
"Bent southward suddenly,
And I followed the curving shore
And ever southward bore
Into a nameless sea.

"And there we hunted the walrus,
The narwhale, and the seal;
Ha! 't was a noble game!
And like the lightning's flame
Flew our harpoons of steel.

"There were six of us all together,
Norsemen of Helgoland;
In two days and no more
We killed of them threescore,
And dragged them to the strand!"

Here Alfred the Truth-teller
Suddenly closed his book,
And lifted his blue eyes,

With doubt and strange surmise
  Depicted in their look.

And Othere, the old sea-captain,
  Stared at him wild and weird,
Then smiled, till his shining teeth
Gleamed white from underneath
  His tawny, quivering beard.

And to the King of the Saxons,
  In witness of the truth,
Raising his noble head,
He stretched his brown hand and said,
  "Behold this walrus-tooth."

RAIN IN SUMMER

How beautiful is the rain!
After the dust and heat,
In the broad and fiery street,
In the narrow lane,
How beautiful is the rain!

How it clatters along the roofs,
Like the tramp of hoofs!
How it gushes and struggles out
From the throat of the overflowing spout!

Across the window-pane
It pours and pours;
And swift and wide,
With a muddy tide,
Like a river down the gutter roars
The rain, the welcome rain!

The sick man from his chamber looks
At the twisted brooks;

He can feel the cool
Breath of each little pool;
His fevered brain
Grows calm again,
And he breathes a blessing on the rain.

From the neighbouring school
Come the boys,
With more than their wonted noise
And commotion;
And down the wet streets
Sail their mimic fleets,
Till the treacherous pool
Ingulfs them in its whirling
And turbulent ocean.

In the country on every side,
Where far and wide,
Like a leopard's tawny and spotted hide,
Stretches the plain,
To the dry grass and the drier grain
How welcome is the rain!

In the furrowed land
The toilsome and patient oxen stand;
Lifting the yoke-encumbered head,
With their dilated nostrils spread,
They silently inhale
The clover-scented gale,
And the vapours that arise
From the well-watered and smoking soil.
For this rest in the furrow after toil
Their large and lustrous eyes
Seem to thank the Lord,
More than man's spoken word.

Near at hand,
From under the sheltering trees,
The farmer sees
His pastures and his fields of grain,
As they bend their tops
To the numberless beating drops
Of the incessant rain.
He counts it as no sin
That he sees therein
Only his own thrift and gain.

These and far more than these,
The Poet sees!
He can behold
Aquarius old [1]
Walking the fenceless fields of air:
And from each ample fold
Of the clouds about him rolled
Scattering everywhere
The showery rain,
As the farmer scatters his grain.

He can behold
Things manifold
That have not yet been wholly told,—
Have not been wholly sung nor said.
For his thought, that never stops,
Follows the water-drops
Down to the graves of the dead,
Down through chasms and gulfs profound,
To the dreary fountain-head
Of lakes and rivers under ground;
And sees them, when the rain is done,
On the bridge of colours seven
Climbing up once more to heaven,
Opposite the setting sun.

[1] **Aquarius**—The water-bearer, one of the signs of the Zodiac.

Thus the Seer,
With vision clear,
Sees forms appear and disappear,
In the perpetual round of strange,
Mysterious change
From birth to death, from death to birth,
From earth to heaven, from heaven to earth,
Till glimpses more sublime
Of things, unseen before
Unto his wondering eyes reveal
The Universe, as an immeasurable wheel
Turning for evermore
In the rapid and rushing river of Time.

THE DAY IS DONE

THE day is done, and the darkness
Falls from the wings of Night,
As a feather is wafted downward
From an eagle in his flight.

I see the lights of the village
Gleam through the rain and the mist,
And a feeling of sadness comes o'er me
That my soul cannot resist:

A feeling of sadness and longing,
That is not akin to pain,
And resembles sorrow only
As the mist resembles the rain.

Come, read to me some poem,
Some simple and heartfelt lay,
That shall soothe this restless feeling,
And banish the thoughts of day.

Not from the grand old masters,
Not from the bards sublime,
Whose distant footsteps echo
Through the corridors of Time.

For, like strains of martial music,
Their mighty thoughts suggest
Life's endless toil and endeavour;
And to-night I long for rest.

Read from some humbler poet,
Whose songs gushed from his heart,
As showers from the clouds of summer,
Or tears from the eyelids start;

Who, through long days of labour,
And nights devoid of ease,
Still heard in his soul the music
Of wonderful melodies.

Such songs have power to quiet
The restless pulse of care,
And come like the benediction
That follows after prayer.

Then read from the treasured volume
The poem of thy choice,
And lend to the rhyme of the poet
The beauty of thy voice.

And the night shall be filled with music,
And the cares that infest the day,
Shall fold their tents like the Arabs,
And as silently steal away.

THE BROOK AND THE WAVE

THE brooklet came from the mountain,
As sang the bard of old,
Running with feet of silver
Over the sands of gold!

Far away in the briny ocean
There rolled a turbulent wave,
Now singing along the sea-beach,
Now howling along the cave.

And the brooklet has found the billow,
Though they flowed so far apart,
And has filled with its freshness and sweetness
That turbulent, bitter heart.

THE EMPEROR'S BIRD'S-NEST

ONCE the Emperor Charles [1] of Spain,
With his swarthy, grave commanders,
I forget in what campaign,
Long besieged, in mud and rain,
Some old frontier town of Flanders.

Up and down the dreary camp,
In great boots of Spanish leather,
Striding with a measured tramp,
These Hidalgos,[2] dull and damp,
Cursed the Frenchmen, cursed the weather.

Thus as to and fro they went,
Over upland and through hollow,
Giving their impatience vent,

[1] **Charles**—Charles V. (1500-1558).
[2] **Hidalgos**—Spanish noblemen.

Perched upon the Emperor's tent,
In he nest, they spied a swallow.

Yes, it was a swallow's nest,
Built of clay and hair of horses.
Mane, or tail, or dragon's crest,
Found on hedge-rows east and west,
After skirmish of the forces.

Then an old Hidalgo said,
As he twirled his gray mustachio,
"Sure this swallow overhead
Thinks the Emperor's tent a shed,
And the Emperor but a Macho!"[1]

Hearing his imperial name
Coupled with those words of malice,
Half in anger, half in shame,
Forth the great campaigner came
Slowly from his canvas palace.

"Let no hand the bird molest,"
Said he solemnly, "nor hurt her!"
Adding then, by way of jest,
"Golondrina[2] is my guest,
'Tis the wife of some deserter!"

Swift as bowstring speeds a shaft,
Through the camp was spread the rumour,
And the soldiers, as they quaffed
Flemish beer at dinner, laughed
At the Emperor's pleasant humour.

[1] **Macho**—Mule.

[2] **Golondrina**—The feminine form of the Spanish word for a swallow. The same word is used for a deserter from the army.

So unharmed and unafraid
Sat the swallow still and brooded,
Till the constant cannonade
Through the walls a breach had made,
And the siege was thus concluded.

Then the army, elsewhere bent,
Struck its tents as if disbanding,
Only not the Emperor's tent,
For he ordered, ere he went,
Very curtly, "Leave it standing!"

So it stood there all alone,
Loosely flapping, torn and tattered,
Till the brood was fledged and flown,
Singing o'er those walls of stone
Which the cannon-shot had shattered.

A DAY OF SUNSHINE

O GIFT of God! O perfect day:
Whereon shall no man work, but play;
Whereon it is enough for me,
Not to be doing, but to be!

Through every fibre of my brain,
Through every nerve, through every vein,
I feel the electric thrill, the touch
Of life, that seems almost too much.

I hear the wind among the trees
Playing celestial symphonies;
I see the branches downward bent,
Like keys of some great instrument.

And over me unrolls on high
The splendid scenery of the sky,
Where through a sapphire sea the sun
Sails like a golden galleon,

Towards yonder cloud-land in the West,
Towards yonder Islands of the Blest,[1]
Whose steep sierra far uplifts
Its craggy summits white with drifts.

Blow, winds! and waft through all the rooms
The snow-flakes of the cherry-blooms!
Blow, winds! and bend within my reach
The fiery blossoms of the peach!

O Life and Love! O happy throng
Of thoughts, whose only speech is song!
O heart of man! canst thou not be
Blithe as the air is, and as free?

AUTUMN

Thou comest, Autumn, heralded by the rain,
With banners, by great gales incessant fanned,
Brighter than brightest silks of Samarcand,[2]
And stately oxen harnessed to thy wain!
Thou standest, like imperial Charlemagne,[3]
Upon thy bridge of gold; thy royal hand

[1] **Islands of the Blest**—The Happy or Fortunate Islands, supposed by the ancients to be situated somewhere in the ocean to the west of Europe. They were the home of the favourites of the gods after death.

[2] **Samarcand**—A city in Turkestan famous for its silks.

[3] **Charlemagne**—Charles the Great, King of the Franks. He was crowned Emperor of the Romans in 800. The Germans have a legend that during seasons of plenty Charlemagne crosses the Rhine on a golden bridge and blesses the grain and the grapes.

Outstretched with benedictions o'er the land,
Blessing the farms through all thy vast domain!
Thy shield is the red harvest moon, suspended
So long beneath the heaven's o'erhanging eaves;
Thy steps are by the farmer's prayers attended;
Like flames upon an altar shine the sheaves;
And, following thee, in thy ovation splendid,
Thine almoner, the wind, scatters the golden leaves!

THE SECRET OF THE SEA

Ah! what pleasant visions haunt me
As I gaze upon the sea!
All the old romantic legends,
All my dreams come back to me.

Sails of silk and ropes of sandal,
Such as gleam in ancient lore;
And the singing of the sailors,
And the answer from the shore!

Most of all, the Spanish ballad
Haunts me oft, and tarries long,
Of the noble Count Arnaldos
And the sailor's mystic song.

Like the long waves on a sea-beach,
Where the sand as silver shines,
With a soft, monotonous cadence,
Flow its unrhymed lyric lines;—

Telling how the Count Arnaldos,
With his hawk upon his hand,
Saw a fair and stately galley,
Steering onward to the land;

How he heard the ancient helmsman
  Chant a song so wild and clear,
That the sailing sea-bird slowly
  Poised upon the mast to hear,

Till his soul was full of longing,
  And he cried, with impulse strong,—
"Helmsman! for the love of heaven,
  Teach me, too, that wondrous song!"

"Wouldst thou," —so the helmsman answered,
  "Learn the secret of the sea?
Only those who brave its dangers
  Comprehend its mystery!"

In each sail that skims the horizon,
  In each landward-blowing breeze,
I behold that stately galley,
  Hear those mournful melodies;

Till my soul is full of longing
  For the secret of the sea,
And the heart of the great ocean
  Sends a thrilling pulse through me.

SIR HUMPHREY GILBERT[1]

SOUTHWARD with fleet of ice
  Sailed the corsair Death;
Wild and fast blew the blast,
  And the east-wind was his breath.

[1] **Sir Humphrey Gilbert**—See *High School Prose Book*, Part II., in "Morang's Literature Series."

His lordly ships of ice
Glisten in the sun;
On each side, like pennons wide,
Flashing crystal streamlets run.

His sails of white sea-mist
Dripped with silver rain;
But where he passed there were cast
Leaden shadows o'er the main.

Eastward from Campobello
Sir Humphrey Gilbert sailed;
Three days or more seaward he bore,
Then, alas! the land-wind failed.

Alas! the land-wind failed,
And ice-cold grew the night;
And nevermore, on sea or shore,
Should Sir Humphrey see the light.

He sat upon the deck,
The Book was in his hand;
"Do not fear! Heaven is as near,"
He said, "by water as by land."

In the first watch of the night,
Without a signal's sound,
Out of the sea mysteriously
The fleet of Death rose all around.

The moon and the evening star
Were hanging in the shrouds;
Every mast, as it passed,
Seemed to rake the passing clouds.

They grappled with their prize,
At midnight black and cold!
As of a rock was the shock;
Heavily the ground-swell rolled.

Southward through day and dark,
They drift in close embrace,
With mist and rain, o'er the open main;
Yet there seems no change of place.

Southward, forever southward,
They drift through dark and day;
And like a dream, in the Gulf-Stream
Sinking, vanish all away.

THE THREE KINGS

THREE Kings came riding from far away,
Melchior and Gaspar and Baltasar;
Three Wise Men out of the East were they,
And they travelled by night and they slept by day,
For their guide was a beautiful, wonderful star.

The star was so beautiful, large, and clear,
That all the other stars of the sky
Became a white mist in the atmosphere,
And by this they knew that the coming was near
Of the Prince foretold in the prophecy.

Three caskets they bore on their saddle-bows,
Three caskets of gold with golden keys;
Their robes were of crimson silk with rows
Of bells and pomegranates and furbelows,
Their turbans like blossoming almond-trees.

And so the three Kings rode into the West,
Through the dusk of night, over hill and dell,
And sometimes they nodded with beard on breast,
And sometimes talked, as they paused to rest,
With the people they met at some wayside well.

"Of the child that is born," said Baltasar,
"Good people, I pray you, tell us the news;
For we in the East have seen his star,
And have ridden fast, and have ridden far,
To find and worship the King of the Jews."

And the people answered, "You ask in vain;
We know of no king but Herod the Great!"
They thought the Wise Men were men insane,
As they spurred their horses across the plain,
Like riders in haste, and who cannot wait.

And when they came to Jerusalem,
Herod the Great, who had heard this thing,
Sent for the Wise Men and questioned them;
And said, "Go down unto Bethlehem,
And bring me tidings of this new king."

So they rode away; and the star stood still,
The only one in the gray of morn;
Yes, it stopped,—it stood still of its own free will,
Right over Bethlehem on the hill,
The city of David, where Christ was born.

And the Three Kings rode through the gate and the guard,
Through the silent street, till their horses turned
And nc hed as they entered the great inn-yard;
But the windows were closed, and the doors were barred,
And only a light in the stable burned.

And cradled there in the scented hay,
In the air made sweet by the breath of kine,
The little child in the manger lay,
The child that would be king one day
Of a kingdom not human but divine.

His mother Mary of Nazareth
Sat watching beside his place of rest,
Watching the even flow of his breath,
For the joy of life and the terror of death
Were mingled together in her breast.

They laid their offerings at his feet:
The gold was their tribute to a King,
The frankincense, with its odour sweet,
Was for the Priest, the Paraclete,[1]
The myrrh for the body's burying.

And the mother wondered and bowed her head,
And sat as still as a statue of stone;
Her heart was troubled yet comforted,
Remembering what the Angel had said
Of an endless reign and of David's throne.

Then the Kings rode out of the city gate,
With a clatter of hoofs in proud array;
But they went not back to Herod the Great,
For they knew his malice and feared his hate,
And returned to their homes by another way.

[1] **Paraclete**—The literal meaning is "one called to support or aid." The term is usually applied to the Holy Spirit.

WALTER VON DER VOGELWEID[1]

VOGELWEID the Minnesinger,
When he left this world of ours,
Laid his body in the cloister,
Under Wurtzburg's minster towers.

And he gave the monks his treasures,
Gave them all with his behest:
They should feed the birds at noontide
Daily on his place of rest;

Saying, "From these wandering minstrels
I have learned the art of song;
Let me now repay the lessons
They have taught so well and long."

Thus the bard of love departed;
And, fulfilling his desire,
On his tomb the birds were feasted
By the children of the choir.

Day by day, o'er tower and turret,
In foul weather and in fair,
Day by day, in vaster numbers,
Flocked the poets of the air.

On the tree whose heavy branches
Overshadowed all the place,
On the pavement, on the tombstone,
On the poet's sculptured face,

[1] **Vogelweid**—One of the principal minnesingers or lyric poets of Germany in the thirteenth century. The word means bird-meadow.

On the cross-bars of each window,
On the lintel of each door,
They renewed the War of Wartburg,[1]
Which the bard had fought before.

There they sang their merry carols,
Sang their lauds on every side;
And the name their voices uttered
Was the name of Vogelweid.

Till at length the portly abbot
Murmured, "Why this waste of food?
Be it changed to loaves henceforward
For our fasting brotherhood."

Then in vain o'er tower and turret,
From the walls and woodland nests,
When the minster bells rang noontide,
Gathered the unwelcome guests.

Then in vain, with cries discordant,
Clamorous round the Gothic spire,
Screamed the feathered Minnesingers
For the children of the choir.

Time has long effaced the inscriptions
On the cloister's funeral stones,
And tradition only tells us
Where repose the poet's bones.

But around the vast cathedral,
By sweet echoes multiplied,
Still the birds repeat the legend,
And the name of Vogelweid.

[1] **War of Wartburg**—A famous poetical contest of the thirteenth century known in literary history by this name. During this contest Walter von der Vogelweid triumphed over his opponent Heinrich von Ofterdingen.

SUNRISE ON THE HILLS

I stood upon the hills, when heaven's wide arch
Was glorious with the sun's returning march,
And woods were brightened, and soft gales
Went forth to kiss the sun-clad vales.
The clouds were far beneath me; bathed in light,
They gathered midway round the wooded height,
And, in their fading glory shone
Like hosts in battle overthrown,
As many a pinnacle, with shifting glance,
Through the gray mist thrust up its shattered lance,
And rocking on the cliff was left
The dark pine, blasted bare, and cleft.
The veil of cloud was lifted, and below
Glowed the rich valley, and the river's flow
Was darkened by the forest's shade,
Or glistened in the white cascade;
Where upward, in the mellow blush of day,
The noisy bittern wheeled his spiral way.

I heard the distant waters dash,
I saw the current whirl and flash,
And richly, by the blue lake's silver beach,
The woods were banding with a silent reach.
Then o'er the vale, with gentle swell,
The music of the village bell
Came sweetly to the echo-giving hills;
And the wild horn, whose voice the woodland fills,
Was ringing to the merry shout
That faint and far the glen sent out,
Where, answering to the sudden shot, thin smoke,
Through thick-leaved branches, from the dingle broke.

If thou art worn and hard beset
With sorrows, that thou wouldst forget,

If thou wouldst read a lesson, that will keep
Thy heart from fainting and thy soul from sleep,
Go to the woods and hills! No tears
Dim the sweet look that Nature wears.

THE RAINY DAY

THE day is cold and dark and dreary;
It rains, and the wind is never weary;
The vine still clings to the mouldering wall,
But at every blast the dead leaves fall,
And the day is dark and dreary.

My life is cold, and dark, and dreary;
It rains, and the wind is never weary;
My thoughts still cling to the mouldering past,
But the hopes of youth fall thick in the blast,
And the days are dark and dreary.

Be still, sad heart! and cease repining;
Behind the clouds is the sun still shining;
Thy fate is the common fate of all,
Into each life some rain must fall,
Some days must be dark and dreary.

AFTERMATH

WHEN the summer fields are mown,
When the birds are fledged and flown,
And the dry leaves strew the path;
With the falling of the snow,
With the cawing of the crow
Once again the fields we mow
And gather in the aftermath.

Not the sweet, new grass with flowers
Is this harvesting of ours;
Not the upland clover bloom;
But the rowen mixed with weeds,
Tangled tufts from marsh and meads,
Where the poppy drops its seeds
In the silence and the gloom.

THE LIGHTHOUSE

The rocky ledge runs far into the sea,
And on its outer point, some miles away,
The Lighthouse lifts its massive masonry,
A pillar of fire [1] by night, of cloud by day.

Even at this distance I can see the tides,
Upheaving, break unheard along its base,
A speechless wrath that rises and subsides
In the white lip and tremor of the face.

And as the evening darkens, lo! how bright,
Through the deep purple of the twilight air,
Beams forth the sudden radiance of its light
With strange, unearthly splendour in the glare!

Not one alone; from each projecting cape
And perilous reef along the ocean's verge
Starts into life a dim, gigantic shape,
Holding its lantern o'er the restless surge.

[1] **Pillar of fire**—*Exodus* xiii, 21.

Like the great giant Christopher [1] it stands
  Upon the brink of the tempestuous wave,
Wading far out among the rocks and sands,
  The night-o'ertaken mariner to save.

And the great ships sail outward and return,
  Bending and bowing o'er the billowy swells,
And ever joyful as they see it burn,
  They wave their silent welcomes and farewells.

They come forth from the darkness, and their sails
  Gleam for a moment only in the blaze,
And eager faces, as the light unveils,
  Gaze at the tower, and vanish while they gaze.

The mariner remembers when a child,
  On his first voyage, he saw it fade and sink;
And when, returning from adventures wild,
  He saw it rise again o'er ocean's brink.

Steadfast, serene, immovable, the same
  Year after year, through all the silent night
Burns on forevermore that quenchless flame,
  Shines on that inextinguishable light!

It sees the ocean to its bosom clasp
  The rocks and sea-sand with the kiss of peace;
It sees the wild winds lift it in their grasp,
  And hold it up, and shake it like a fleece.

[1] **Christopher**—A giant of the third century. He made a vow to enter the service of the strongest and served in turn the emperor and the devil, but finding Christ to be the stronger he entered his service, employing himself in carrying pilgrims across a deep stream. One day he attempted to carry an infant across the stream, but the infant grew heavier and the giant was nearly drowned. The infant was Christ, who made himself known and gave to the giant the name of Christopher, —Christ-bearer.

The startled waves leap over it; the storm
Smites it with all the scourges of the rain,
And steadily against its solid form
Press the great shoulders of the hurricane.

The sea-bird wheeling round it, with the din
Of wings and winds and solitary cries,
Blinded and maddened by the light within,
Dashes himself against the glare and dies.

A new Prometheus,[1] chained upon the rock,
Still grasping in his hand the fire of Jove,
It does not hear the cry, nor heed the shock,
But hails the mariner with words of love.

"Sail on!" it says, "sail on, ye stately ships!
And with your floating bridge the ocean span;
Be mine to guard this light from all eclipse,
Be yours to bring man nearer unto man!"

THE LIGHT OF STARS

The night is come, but not too soon;
And sinking silently,
All silently, the little moon
Drops down behind the sky.

There is no light in earth or heaven
But the cold light of stars;
And the first watch of night is given
To the red planet Mars.[2]

[1] **Prometheus**—Because he had stolen fire from the sun, in order to confer its benefit on man, Prometheus was chained by Jupiter to a rock in Mount Caucasus. Here a vulture perpetually preyed upon his vitals.

[2] **Mars**—Mars was the god of war among the Romans.

Is it the tender star of love?
The star of love and dreams?
O no! from that blue tent above
A hero's armour gleams.

And earnest thoughts within me rise,
When I behold afar,
Suspended in the evening skies,
The shield of that red star.

O star of strength! I see thee stand
And smile upon my pain;
Thou beckonest with thy mailèd hand,
And I am strong again.

Within my breast there is no light,
But the cold light of stars;
I give the first watch of the night
To the red planet Mars.

The star of the unconquered will,
He rises in my breast,
Serene, and resolute, and still,
And calm and self-possessed.

And thou, too, whosoe'er thou art,
That readest this brief psalm,
As one by one thy hopes depart,
Be resolute and calm.

O, fear not in a world like this,
And thou shalt know ere long,
Know how sublime a thing it is
To suffer and be strong.

TRAVELS BY THE FIRESIDE

The ceaseless rain is falling fast,
And yonder gilded vane,
Immovable for three days past,
Points to the misty main.

It drives me in upon myself
And to the fireside gleams,
To pleasant books that crowd my shelf,
And still more pleasant dreams.

I read whatever bards have sung
Of lands beyond the sea,
And the bright days when I was young
Come thronging back to me.

In fancy I can hear again
The Alpine torrent's roar,
The mule-bells on the hills of Spain,
The sea at Elsinore.

I see the convent's gleaming wall
Rise from its groves of pine,
And towers of old cathedrals tall,
And castles by the Rhine.

I journey on by park and spire,
Beneath centennial trees,
Through fields with poppies all on fire,
And gleams of distant seas.

I fear no more the dust and heat,
No more I feel fatigue,
While journeying with another's feet
O'er many a lengthening league.

Let others traverse sea and land,
And toil through various climes,
I turn the world round with my hand
Reading these poet's rhymes.

From them I learn whatever lies
Beneath each changing zone,
And see, when looking with their eyes,
Better than with mine own.

DAYBREAK

A WIND came up out of the sea,
And said, "O mists, make room for me."

It hailed the ships, and cried, "Sail on,
Ye mariners, the night is gone."

And hurried landward far away,
Crying, "Awake! it is the day."

It said unto the forest, "Shout!
Hang all your leafy banners out!"

It touched the wood-bird's folded wing,
And said, "O bird, awake and sing."

And o'er the farms, "O chanticleer,
Your clarion blow; the day is near."

It whispered to the fields of corn,
"Bow down and hail the coming morn."

It shouted through the belfry-tower,
"Awake, O bell! proclaim the hour."

It crossed the churchyard with a sigh,
And said, "Not yet! in quiet lie."

HYMN TO THE NIGHT

I HEARD the trailing garments of the night
Sweep through her marble halls:
I saw her sable skirts all fringed with light
From the celestial walls!

I felt her presence, by its spell of might,
Stoop o'er me from above;
The calm, majestic presence of the Night,
As of the one I love.

I heard the sounds of sorrow and delight,
The manifold, soft chimes,
That fill the haunted chambers of the Night,
Like some old poet's rhymes.

From the cool cisterns of the midnight air
My spirit drank repose;
The fountain of perpetual peace flows here,—
From those deep cisterns flows.

O holy Night! from thee I learn to bear
What man has borne before!
Thou layest thy finger on the lips of care,
And they complain no more.

Peace! Peace! Orestes[1]-like I breathe this prayer!
Descend with broad-winged flight,
The welcome, the thrice prayed for, the most fair,
The best-beloved Night!

[1] **Orestes**—Orestes was the son of Agamemnon and Clytemnestra. Agamemnon had been murdered by his wife, and Orestes in turn killed Clytemnestra for the crime. For this deed he was punished by being pursued by the Furies, who gave him rest neither night nor day.

SANTA FILOMENA[1]

WHENE'ER a noble deed is wrought,
Whene'er is spoken a noble thought,
Our hearts in glad surprise,
To higher levels rise.

The tidal wave of deeper souls
Into our inmost being rolls,
And lifts us unawares
Out of all meaner cares.

Honour to those whose words or deeds
Thus help us in our daily needs,
And by their overflow
Raise us from what is low!

Thus thought I as by night I read
Of the great army of the dead,
The trenches cold and damp,
The starved and frozen camp,—

The wounded from the battle-plain,
In dreary hospitals of pain,
The cheerless corridors,
The cold and stony floors.

Lo! in that house of misery
A lady with a lamp I see
Pass through the glimmering gloom,
And flit from room to room.

[1] **Filomena**—A martyr of the third century who suffered during the persecution of Diocletian. She was the daughter of one of the smaller Grecian kings, and on her refusal to marry the Emperor she was cruelly tortured and finally beheaded. According to the legend the arrows and spears thrown at her by order of the Emperor recoiled and killed the soldiers who threw them.

And slow, as in a dream of bliss,
The speechless sufferer turns to kiss
Her shadow as it falls
Upon the darkening walls.

As if a door in heaven should be
Opened and then closed suddenly,
The vision came and went,
The light shone and was spent.

On England's annals, through the long
Hereafter of her speech and song,
That light its ray shall cast
From portals of the past.

A Lady with a Lamp[1] shall stand
In the great history of the land,
A noble type of good,
Heroic womanhood.

Not even shall be wanting here
The palm, the lily, and the spear,
The symbols[2] that of yore
Saint Filomena bore.

[1] **Lady with a Lamp**—The reference is to Florence Nightingale, whose heroic and self-sacrificing efforts on behalf of the sick and wounded during the Crimean war are so well known.

Symbols—In one of the churches at Pisa is a painting of St. Filomena, representing her as a beautiful young woman attended by two angels carrying a lily, a palm and a spear. In the foreground are a crowd of sick and maimed who are healed by her intercession. The palm is the emblem of her triumphant martyrdom, the lily of her purity and innocence and the spear refers to the fate of the soldiers who threw their spears at her.

FLOWERS

Spake full well, in language quaint and olden,
One who dwelleth by the castled Rhine,
When he called the flowers, so blue and golden,
Stars that in earth's firmament do shine.

Stars they are, wherein we read our history
As astrologers and seers of eld;
Yet not wrapped about with awful mystery,
Like the burning stars which they beheld.

Wondrous truths, and manifold as wondrous,
God hath written in those stars above;
But not less in the bright flowerets under us
Stands the revelation of his love.

Bright and glorious is that revelation,
Written all over this great world of ours;
Making evident our own creation,
In these stars of earth, these golden flowers.

And the Poet, faithful and far-seeing,
Sees, alike in stars and flowers, a part
Of the self-same, universal being,
Which is throbbing in his brain and heart.

Gorgeous flowerets in the sunlight shining,
Blossoms flaunting in the eye of day,
Tremulous leaves, with soft and silver lining,
Buds that open only to decay;

Brilliant hopes, all woven in gorgeous tissues,
Flaunting gayly in the golden light,
Large desires, with most uncertain issues,
Tender wishes blossoming at night!

These in flowers and men are more than seeming,
Workings are they of the self-same powers,
Which the Poet in no idle dreaming,
Seeth in himself and in the flowers.

Everywhere about us are they glowing,
Some like stars, to tell us Spring is born;
Others, their blue eyes with tears o'erflowing,
Stand like Ruth[1] amid the golden corn;

Not alone in Spring's armorial bearing,
And in Summer's green-emblazoned field,
But in arms of brave old Autumn's wearing,
In the centre of his brazen shield;

Not alone in meadows and green alleys,
On the mountain-top, and by the brink
Of sequestered pools in woodland valleys,
Where the slaves of nature stoop to drink;

Not alone in her vast dome of glory,
Not on graves of bird and beast alone,
But in old cathedrals, high and hoary,
On the tombs of heroes, carved in stone;

In the cottage of the rudest peasant,
In ancestral homes, whose crumbling towers
Speaking of the Past unto the Present
Tell us of the ancient Games of Flowers;

In all places, then, and in all seasons,
Flowers expand their light and soul-like wings,
Teaching us, by most persuasive reasons,
How akin they are to human things.

[1] **Ruth**—The reference is to Ruth gleaning in the field of Boaz.

And with childlike, credulous affection
We behold their tender buds expand;
Emblems of our own great resurrection,
Emblems of the bright and better land.

THE BUILDERS

All are architects of Fate,
Working in these walls of Time;
Some with massive deeds and great,
Some with ornaments of rhyme.

Nothing useless is, or low;
Each thing in its place is best;
And what seems but idle show
Strengthens and supports the rest.

For the structure that we raise,
Time is with materials filled;
Our to-days and yesterdays
Are the blocks with which we build.

Truly shape and fashion these;
Leave no yawning gaps between;
Think not, because no man sees,
Such things will remain unseen.

In the elder days of Art,
Builders wrought with greatest care
Each minute and unseen part;
For the Gods see everywhere.

Let us do our work as well,
Both the unseen and the seen;
Make the house, where Gods may dwell,
Beautiful, entire, and clean.

Else our lives are incomplete,
Standing in these walls of Time,
Broken stairways, where the feet
Stumble as they seek to climb.

Build to-day, then, strong and sure,
With a firm and ample base;
And ascending and secure
Shall to-morrow find its place.

Thus alone can we attain
To those turrets, where the eye
Sees the world as one vast plain,
And one boundless reach of sky.

A PSALM OF LIFE

WHAT THE HEART OF THE YOUNG MAN SAID TO THE PSALMIST

TELL me not, in mournful numbers,
Life is but an empty dream!—
For the soul is dead that slumbers,
And things are not what they seem.

Life is real! Life is earnest!
And the grave is not its goal;
Dust thou art, to dust returnest,
Was not spoken of the soul.

Not enjoyment, and not sorrow,
Is our destined end or way;
But to act, that each to-morrow
Find us farther than to-day.

Art is long, and Time is fleeting,
And our hearts, though stout and brave,
Still, like muffled drums, are beating
Funeral marches to the grave.

In the world's broad field of battle,
In the bivouac of Life,
Be not like dumb, driven cattle!
Be a hero in the strife!

Trust no Future, howe'er pleasant!
Let the dead Past bury its dead!
Act,—act in the living Present!
Heart within, and God o'erhead!

Lives of great men all remind us
We can make our lives sublime,
And, departing, leave behind us
Footprints on the sands of time;—

Footprints, that perhaps another,
Sailing o'er life's solemn main,
A forlorn and shipwrecked brother,
Seeing, shall take heart again.

Let us, then, be up and doing,
With a heart for any fate;
Still achieving, still pursuing,
Learn to labour and to wait.

RESIGNATION

THERE is no flock, however watched and tended,
But one dead lamb is there!
There is no fireside, howsoe'er defended,
But has one vacant chair!

The air is full of farewells to the dying,
And mournings for the dead;
The heart of Rachel,[1] for her children crying,
Will not be comforted!

Let us be patient! These severe afflictions
Not from the ground[2] arise,
But oftentimes celestial benedictions
Assume this dark disguise.

We see but dimly through the mists and vapours;
Amid these earthly damps
What seem to us but sad funereal tapers
May be heaven's distant lamps.

There is no Death! What seems so is transition;
This life of mortal breath
Is but a suburb of the life elysian,
Whose portal we call Death.

She is not dead,—the child of our affection,—
But gone unto that school
Where she no longer needs our poor protection,
And Christ himself doth rule.

In that great cloister's stillness and seclusion,
By guardian angels led,
Safe from temptation, safe from sin's pollution,
She lives, whom we call dead.

Day after day we think what she is doing
In those bright realms of air;
Year after year, her tender steps pursuing,
Behold her grown more fair.

[1] **Rachel**—"A voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation and bitter weeping; Rachel weeping for her children refused to be comforted for her children, because they were not." —*Jeremiah* xxxi, 15.

[2] **The ground**—"Affliction cometh not forth out of the dust, neither doth trouble spring out of the ground."—*Job* v, 6.

Thus do we walk with her, and keep unbroken
  The bond which nature gives,
Thinking that our remembrance, though unspoken,
  May reach her where she lives.

Not as a child shall we again behold her;
  For when with raptures wild
In our embraces we again enfold her,
  She will not be a child;

But a fair maiden, in her Father's mansion,
  Clothed with celestial grace;
And beautiful with all the soul's expansion
  Shall we behold her face.

And though at times impetuous with emotion
  And anguish long suppressed,
The swelling heart heaves moaning like the ocean,
  That cannot be at rest,—

We will be patient, and assuage the feeling
  We may not wholly stay;
By silence sanctifying, not concealing,
  The grief that must have way.

THE LADDER OF SAINT AUGUSTINE

SAINT AUGUSTINE![1] well hast thou said,
  That of our vices we can frame
A ladder, if we will but tread
  Beneath our feet each deed of shame!

[1] **St. Augustine**—One of the early fathers of the church. His principal work is his *Confessions*. Longfell w's poem is based on a thought in one of Augustine's sermons.

All common things, each day's events,
That with the hour begin and end,
Our pleasures and our discontents,
Are rounds by which we may ascend.

The low desire, the base design,
That makes another's virtues less;
The revel of the ruddy wine,
And all occasions of excess;

The longing for ignoble things;
The strife for triumph more than truth;
The hardening of the heart that brings
Irreverence for the dreams of youth;

All thoughts of ill; all evil deeds,
That have their root in thoughts of ill;
Whatever hinders or impedes
The action of the nobler will;—

All these must first be trampled down
Beneath our feet, if we would gain
In the bright fields of fair renown
The right of eminent domain.[1]

We have not wings, we cannot soar;
But we have feet to scale and climb
By slow degrees, by more and more,
The cloudy summits of our time.

The mighty pyramids of stone
That wedge-like cleave the desert airs,
When nearer seen and better known,
Are but gigantic flights of stairs.

[1] **Eminent domain**—Sovereign ownership.

The distant mountains, that uprear
Their solid bastions to the skies,
Are crossed by pathways, that appear
As we to higher levels rise.

The heights by great men reached and kept
Were not attained by sudden flight,
But they, while their companions slept,
Were toiling upward in the night.

Standing on what too long we bore
With shoulders bent and downcast eyes,
We may discern — unseen before —
A path to higher destinies.

Nor deem the irrevocable past
As wholly wasted, wholly vain,
If, rising on its wrecks, at last
To something nobler we attain.

THE FIRE OF DRIFTWOOD

We sat within the farm-house old,
Whose windows, looking o'er the bay,
Gave to the sea-breeze, damp and cold
An easy entrance, night and day.

Not far away we saw the port,
The strange, old-fashioned, silent town,
The lighthouse, the dismantled fort,
The wooden houses, quaint and brown.

We sat and talked until the night,
Descending, filled the little room;
Our faces faded from the sight,
Our voices only broke the gloom.

We spake of many a vanished scene,
Of what we once had thought and said,
Of what had been, and might have been,
And who was changed and who was dead;

And all that fills the hearts of friends,
When first they feel, with secret pain,
Their lives thenceforth have separate ends,
And never can be one again;

The first slight swerving of the heart,
That words are powerless to express,
And leave it still unsaid in part,
Or say it in too great excess.

The very tones in which we spake
Had something strange, I could but mark;
The leaves of memory seemed to make
A mournful rustling in the dark.

Oft died the words upon our lips,
As suddenly, from out the fire
Built of the wreck of stranded ships,
The flames would leap and then expire.

And, as their splendour flashed and failed,
We thought of wrecks upon the main,
Of ships dismasted, that were hailed
And sent no answer back again.

The windows, rattling in their frames,
The ocean, roaring up the beach,
The gusty blast, the bickering flames,
All mingled vaguely in our speech;

Until they made themselves a part
  Of fancies floating through the brain,
The long-lost ventures of the heart,
  That send no answers back again.

O flames that glowed! O hearts that yearned!
  They were indeed too much akin,
The driftwood fire without that burned,
  The thoughts that burned and glowed

PEGASUS[1] IN POUND

Once into a quiet village,
  Without haste and without heed,
In the golden prime of morning,
  Strayed the poet's winged steed.

It was Autumn, and incessant
  Piped the quails from shocks and sheaves,
And, like living coals, the apples
  Burned among the withering leaves.

Loud the clamorous bell was ringing
  From its belfry gaunt and grim;
'Twas the daily call to labour,
  Not a triumph meant for him.

Not the less he saw the landscape,
  In its gleaming vapour veiled;
Not the less he breathed the odours
  That the dying leaves exhaled.

[1] **Pegasus**—The winged steed of the Muses which sprang from the blood that flowed from the head of the Gorgon, Medusa, after she had been slain by Perseus. He is fabled to have produced the fountain of Hippocrene on Mount Helicon by a blow from his hoof.

Thus, upon the village common,
By the school-boys he was found;
And the wise men, in their wisdom,
Put him straightway into pound.

Then the sombre village crier,
Ringing loud his brazen bell,
Wandered down the street proclaiming
There was an estray to sell.

And the curious country people,
Rich and poor, and young and old,
Came in haste to see this wondrous
Winged steed, with mane of gold.

Thus the day passed, and the evening
Fell, with vapours cold and dim;
But it brought no food nor shelter,
Brought no straw nor stall, for him.

Patiently, and still expectant,
Looked he through the wooden bars,
Saw the moon rise o'er the landscape,
Saw the tranquil, patient stars;

Till at length the bell, at midnight
Sounded from its dark abode,
And, from out a neighbouring farm-yard
Loud the cock Alectryon[1] crowed.

Then, with nostrils wide distended,
Breaking from his iron chain,
And unfolding far his pinions,
To those stars he soared again.

[1] **Alectryon**—A Greek youth, who, because he neglected his duty and fell asleep, was changed by Mars into a cock.

On the morrow, when the village
  Woke to all its toil and care,
Lo! the strange steed had departed,
  And they knew not when nor where.

But they found, upon the greensward
  Where his struggling hoofs had trod,
Pure and bright, a fountain flowing
  From the hoof-marks in the sod.

From that hour, the fount unfailing
  Gladdens the whole region round,
Strengthening all who drink its waters,
  While it soothes them with its sound.

THE SKELETON IN ARMOUR

"Speak! speak! thou fearful guest!
Who, with thy hollow breast
Still in rude armour drest,
  Comest to daunt me!
Wrapt not in Eastern balms,
But with thy fleshless palms
Stretched, as if asking alms,
  Why dost thou haunt me?"

Then, from those cavernous eyes
Pale flashes seemed to rise,
As when the Northern skies
  Gleam in December;
And, like the water's flow
Under December's snow,
Came a dull voice of woe
  From the heart's chamber.

"I was a Viking old!
My deeds, though manifold,
No Skald[1] in song has told,
No Saga[2] taught thee!
Take heed, that in thy verse
Thou dost the tale rehearse,
Else dread a dead man's curse;
For this I sought thee.

"Far in the Northern Land,
By the wild Baltic's strand,
I, with my childish hand,
Tamed the gerfalcon;
And, with my skates fast-bound,
Skimmed the half-frozen Sound,
That the poor whimpering hound
Trembled to walk on.

"Oft to his frozen lair
Tracked I the grisly bear,
While from my path the hare
Fled like a shadow;
Oft through the forest dark
Followed the were-wolf's[3] bark,
Until the soaring lark
Sang from the meadow.

"But when I older grew,
Joining a corsair's crew,
O'er the dark sea I flew
With the marauders.
Wild was the life we led;
Many the souls that sped,

[1] **Skald**—Poet or minstrel.
[2] **Saga**—Poem or story in verse.
[3] **Were-wolf**—A man transformed into a wolf by magic power.

Many the hearts that bled,
By our stern orders.

"Many a wassail-bout
Wore the long winter out;
Often our midnight shout
Set the cocks crowing,
As we the Berserk's[1] tale
Measured in cups of ale,
Draining the oaken pail,
Filled to o'erflowing.

"Once as I told in glee
Tales of the stormy sea,
Soft eyes did gaze on me,
Burning yet tender;
And as the white stars shine
On the dark Norway pine,
On that dark heart of mine
Fell their soft splendour.

"I wooed the blue-eyed maid,
Yielding, yet half afraid,
And in the forest's shade
Our vows were plighted.
Under its loosened vest
Fluttered her little breast,
Like birds within their nest
By the hawk frighted.

"Bright in her father's hall
Shields gleamed upon the wall,
Loud sang the minstrels all,
Chanting his glory;
When of old Hildebrand
I asked his daughter's hand,
Mute did the minstrels stand
To hear my story.

[1] **Berserk**—A Norse champion.

"While the brown ale he quaffed,
Loud then the champion laughed,
And as the wind-gusts waft
The sea-foam brightly,
So the loud laugh of scorn,
Out of those lips unshorn,
From the deep drinking-horn
Blew the foam lightly.

"She was a Prince's child,
I but a Viking wild,
And though she blushed and smiled,
I was discarded!
Should not the dove so white
Follow the sea-mew's flight,
Why did they leave that night
Her nest unguarded?

"Scarce had I put to sea,
Bearing the maid with me,
Fairest of all was she
Among the Norsemen!
When on the white sea-strand,
Waving his armed hand,
Saw we old Hildebrand,
With twenty horsemen.

"Then launched they to the blast
Bent like a reed each mast,
Yet we were gaining fast,
When the wind failed us;
And with a sudden flaw
Came round the gusty Skaw,[1]
So that our foe we saw
Laugh as he hailed us.

[1] **Skaw**—The cape to the northeast of Denmark.

"And as to catch the gale
Round veered the flapping sail,
'Death!' was the helmsman's hail,
'Death without quarter!'
Mid-ships with iron keel
Struck we her ribs of steel;
Down her black hulk did reel
Through the black water!

"As with his wings aslant,
Sails the fierce cormorant,
Seeking some rocky haunt,
With his prey laden,—
So towards the open main,
Beating to sea again,
Through the wild hurricane,
Bore I the maiden.

"Three weeks we westward bore,
And when the storm was o'er,
Cloud-like we saw the shore
Stretching to leeward;
There for my lady's bower
Built I the lofty tower,
Which, to this very hour,
Stands looking seaward. . .

"There lived we many years;
Time dried the maiden's tears;
She had forgot her fears,
She was a mother;
Death closed her mild blue eyes,
Under that tower she lies;
Ne'er shall the sun arise
On such another!

"Still grew my bosom then,
Still as a stagnant fen!
Hateful to me were men,
The sunlight hateful!
In that vast forest here,
Clad in my warlike gear,
Fell I upon my spear,
O, death was grateful!

"Thus, seamed with many scars,
Bursting these prison bars,
Up to its native stars
My soul ascended!
There from the flowing bowl
Deep drinks the warrior's soul.
Skoal! to the Northland! *skoal!*"[1]
Thus the tale ended.

THE ARROW AND THE SONG

I SHOT an arrow into the air,
It fell to earth, I knew not where;
For, so swiftly it flew, the sight
Could not follow it in its flight.

I breathed a song into the air,
It fell to earth, I knew not where;
For who has sight so keen and strong,
That it can follow the flight of song?

Long, long afterward, in an oak
I found the arrow, still unbroke;
And the song, from beginning to end,
I found again in the heart of a friend.

[1] **Skoal**—The Norse salutation before drinking a health.

KING ROBERT OF SICILY

Robert of Sicily, brother of Pope Urbane
And Valmond, Emperor of Allemaine,[1]
Apparelled in magnificent attire,
With retinue of many a knight and squire,
On St. John's eve, at vespers, proudly sat
And heard the priests chant the Magnificat.[2]
And as he listened, o'er and o'er again
Repeated, like a burden or refrain,
He caught the words, "*Deposuit potentes*
De sede, et exaltavit humiles;"
And slowly lifting up his kingly head
He to a learned clerk beside him said,
"What mean these words?" The clerk made answer meet,
"He has put down the mighty from their seat,
And has exalted them of low degree."

Thereat King Robert muttered scornfully,
"'Tis well that such seditious words are sung
Only by priests and in the Latin tongue;
For unto priests and people be it known,
There is no power can push me from my throne!"
And leaning back, he yawned and fell asleep,
Lulled by the chant monotonous and deep.

When he awoke, it was already night;
The church was empty, and there was no light,
Save where the lamps, that glimmered few and faint,
Lighted a little space before some saint.
He started from his seat and gazed around,
But saw no living thing and heard no sound.
He groped towards the door, but it was locked;

[1] **Allemaine**—Germany.

[2] **Magnificat**—The song of rejoicing sung by the Virgin Mary when receiving Elizabeth. *Luke* i, 46-55.

He cried aloud, and listened, and then knocked,
And uttered awful threatenings and complaints,
And imprecations upon men and saints.
The sound reëchoed from the roof and walls
As if dead priests were laughing in their stalls.

At length the sexton, hearing from without
The tumult of the knocking and the shout,
And thinking thieves were in the house of prayer,
Came with his lantern, asking: "Who is there?"
Half choked with rage, King Robert fiercely said,
"Open: 'tis I, the King! Art thou afraid?"
The frightened sexton, muttering, with a curse,
"This is some drunken vagabond, or worse!"
Turned the great key and flung the portal wide;
A man rushed by him at a single stride,
Haggard, half naked, without hat or cloak,
Who neither turned, nor looked at him, nor spoke,
But leaped into the blackness of the night,
And vanished like a spectre from his sight.

Robert of Sicily, brother of Pope Urbane
And Valmond, Emperor of Allemaine,
Despoiled of his magnificent attire,
Bareheaded, breathless, and besprent with mire,
With sense of wrong and outrage desperate,
Strode on and thundered at the palace gate;
Rushed through the courtyard, thrusting in his rage
To right and left each seneschal and page,
And hurried up the broad and sounding stair,
His white face ghastly in the torches' glare.
From hall to hall he passed with breathless speed;
Voices and cries he heard, but did not heed,
Until at last he reached the banquet-room,
Blazing with light, and breathing with perfume.

There on the dais sat another king,
Wearing his robes, his crown, his signet-ring,
King Robert's self in features, form, and height,
But all transfigured with angelic light!
It was an Angel: and his presence there
With a divine effulgence filled the air,
An exaltation, piercing the disguise,
Though none the hidden Angel recognise.

A moment speechless, motionless, amazed,
The throneless monarch on the Angel gazed,
Who met his look of anger and surprise
With the divine compassion of his eyes;
Then said, "Who art thou? and why com'st thou here?"
To which King Robert answered with a sneer,
"I am the King, and come to claim my own
From an impostor, who usurps my throne!"
And suddenly, at these audacious words,
Up sprang the angry guests, and drew their swords;
The angel answered, with unruffled brow,
"Nay, not the King, but the King's Jester, thou
Henceforth shall wear the bells and scalloped cape,
And for thy counsellor shalt lead an ape;
Thou shalt obey my servants when they call,
And wait upon my henchmen in the hall!"

Deaf to King Robert's threats and cries and prayers,
They thrust him from the hall and down the stairs;
A group of tittering pages ran before,
And as they opened wide the folding-door,
His heart failed, for he heard, with strange alarms,
The boisterous laughter of the men-at-arms,
And all the vaulted chamber roar and ring
With the mock plaudits of "Long live the King!"

Next morning, waking with the day's first beam,
He said within himself, "It was a dream!"
But the straw rustled as he turned his head,
There were the cap and bells beside his bed,
Around him rose the bare, discoloured walls,
Close by, the steeds were champing in their stalls,
And in the corner, a revolting shape,
Shivering and chattering sat the wretched ape.
It was no dream; the world he loved so much
Had turned to dust and ashes at his touch!

Days came and went; and now returned again
To Sicily the old Saturnian[1] reign;
Under the Angel's governance benign
The happy island danced with corn and wine,
And deep within the mountain's burning breast
Enceladus,[2] the giant, was at rest.

Meanwhile King Robert yielded to his fate,
Sullen and silent and disconsolate.
Dressed in the motley garb that Jesters wear,
With look bewildered and a vacant stare,
Close shaven above the ears, as monks are shorn,
By courtiers mocked, by pages laughed to scorn,
His only friend the ape, his only food
What others left,—he still was unsubdued.
And when the Angel met him on his way,
And half in earnest, half in jest, would say,
Sternly, though tenderly, that he might feel
The velvet scabbard held a sword of steel,

[1] **Saturnian reign**—The golden age when Saturn, who was dethroned by his son Jupiter, presided over the gods and ruled the earth.

[2] **Enceladus**—The most powerful of the giants who conspired against Jupiter. After the conflict he was imprisoned within Mount Etna. It was fabled that the flames of Etna proceeded from his breath and that the earth motions were caused by the giant turning to ease his weariness.

"Art thou the King?" the passion of his woe
Burst from him in resistless overflow,
And, lifting high his forehead, he would fling
The haughty answer back, "I am, I am the King!"

Almost three years were ended; when there came
Ambassadors of great repute and name
From Valmond, Emperor of Allemaine,
Unto King Robert, saying that Pope Urbane
By letter summoned them forthwith to come
On Holy Thursday to his city of Rome.
The Angel with great joy received his guests,
And gave them presents of embroidered vests,
And velvet mantles with rich ermine lined,
And rings and jewels of the rarest kind.
Then he departed with them o'er the sea
Into the lovely land of Italy,
Whose loveliness was more resplendent made
By the mere passing of that cavalcade,
With plumes, and cloaks, and housings, and the stir
Of jewelled bridle and of golden spur.
And lo! among the menials, in mock state,
Upon a piebald steed, with shambling gait,
His cloak of fox-tails flapping in the wind
The solemn ape demurely perched behind,
King Robert rode, making huge merriment
In all the country towns through which they went.

The Pope received them with great pomp and blare
Of bannered trumpets, on Saint Peter's square,
Giving his benediction and embrace,
Fervent, and full of apostolic grace.
While with congratulations and with prayers
He entertained the Angel unawares,
Robert, the Jester, bursting through the crowd,
Into their presence rushed, and cried aloud,

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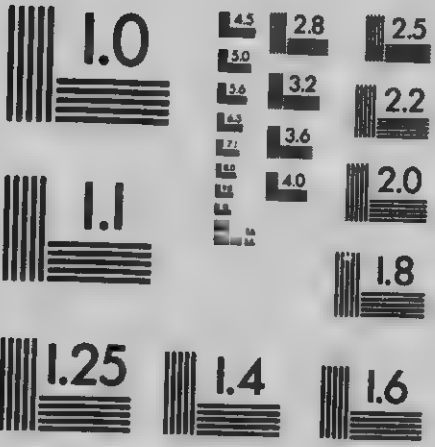

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"I am the King! Look, and behold in me
Robert, your brother, King of Sicily!
This man, who wears my semblance to your eyes,
Is an impostor in a king's disguise.
Do you not know me? does no voice within
Answer my cry, and say we are akin?"
The Pope in silence, but with troubled mien,
Gazed at the Angel's countenance serene;
The Emperor, laughing, said, "It is strange sport
To keep a madman for thy Fool at court!"
And the poor, baffled Jester in disgrace
Was hustled back among the populace.

In solemn state the Holy Week went by,
And Easter Sunday gleamed upon the sky;
The presence of the Angel, with its light,
Before the sun rose, made the city bright,
And with new fervour filled the hearts of men,
Who felt that Christ indeed had risen again.
Even the Jester, on his bed of straw,
With haggard eyes the unwonted splendour saw,
He felt within a power unfelt before,
And, kneeling humbly on his chamber-floor,
He heard the rushing garments of the Lord
Sweep through the silent air, ascending heavenward.

And now the visit ending, and once more
Valmond returning to the Danube's shore,
Homeward the Angel journeyed, and again
The land was made resplendent with his train,
Flashing along the towns of Italy
Unto Salerno, and from thence by sea.
And when once more within Palermo's wall,
And, seated on the throne in his great hall,

He heard the Angelus[1] from convent towers,
As if the better world conversed with ours,
He beckoned to King Robert to draw nigher,
And with a gesture bade the rest retire;
And when they were alone, the Angel said,
"Art thou the King?" Then, bowing down his head,
King Robert crossed both hands upon his breast,
And meekly answered him: "Thou knowest best!
My sins as scarlet are; let me go hence,
And in some cloister's school of penitence,
Across those stones, that pave the way to heaven,
Walk barefoot, till my guilty soul be shriven!"

The Angel smiled, and from his radiant face
A holy light illumined all the place,
And through the open window, loud and clear,
They heard the monks chant in the chapel near,
Above the stir and tumult of the street:
"He has put down the mighty from their seat,
And has exalted them of low degree!"
And through the chant a second melody
Rose like the throbbing of a single string:
"I am an Angel, and thou art the King!"

King Robert, who was standing near the throne,
Lifted his eyes, and lo! he was alone!
But all apparelled as in days of old,
With ermined mantle and with cloth of gold;
And when his courtiers came, they found him there
Kneeling upon the floor, absorbed in silent prayer.

[1] **The Angelus**—The *Angelus Domini* or hyr— to the Virgin Mary. The prayer is recited three times a (at the sound of a bell, which is therefore called the Angel Bell.

THE FIFTIETH BIRTHDAY OF AGASSIZ[1]

It was fifty years ago
In the pleasant month of May,
In the beautiful Pays de Vaud,[2]
A child in its cradle lay.

And Nature, the old nurse, took
The child upon her knee,
Saying: "Here is a story-book
Thy Father has written for thee."

"Come, wander with me," she said,
"Into regions yet untrod,
And read what is still unread
In the manuscripts of God."

And he wandered away and away
With Nature, the dear old nurse,
Who sang to him night and day
The rhymes of the universe.

And whenever the way seemed long,
Or his heart began to fail,
She would sing a more wonderful song,
Or tell a more marvellous tale.

So she keeps him still a child,
And will not let him go,
Though at times his heart beats wild
For the beautiful Pays de Vaud;

[1] **Aggasiz**—The celebrated Swiss naturalist, who became a Professor at Harvard University, Cambridge, in 1849.

[2] **Pays de Vaud**—One of the Swiss Cantons.

Though at times he hears in his dreams
The Ranz des Vaches[1] of old,
And the rush of mountain streams
From glaciers clear and cold;

And the mother at home says, "Hark!
For his voice I listen and yearn;
It is growing late and dark,
And my boy does not return!"

THE SINGERS

God sent His singers upon earth
With songs of sadness and of mirth,
That they might touch the hearts of men,
And bring them back to heaven again.

The first, a youth with soul of fire,
Held in his hand a golden lyre:
Through groves he wandered, and by streams,
Playing the music of our dreams.

The second, with a bearded face,
Stood singing in the market-place,
And stirred with accents deep and loud
The hearts of all the listening crowd.

A gray old man, the third and last,
Sang in cathedrals dim and vast,
While the majestic organ rolled
Contrition from its mouths of gold.

[1] **Ranz des Vaches**—"Tune of the cows." A simple melody used by the Swiss peasants in calling their cattle.

And those who heard the singers three
Disputed which the best might be;
For still their music seemed to start
Discordant echoes in each heart.

But the great Master said, "I see
No best in kind, but in degree;
I gave a various gift to each,
To charm, to strengthen, and to teach.

"These are the three great chords of might,
And he whose ear is tuned aright
Will hear no discord in the three,
But the most perfect harmony."

THE WARDEN OF THE CINQUE PORTS[1]

A MIST was driving down the British Channel,
The day was just begun,
And through the window-panes, on floor and panel,
Streamed the red autumn sun.

It glanced on flowing flag and rippling pennon,
And the white sails of ships;
And, from the frowning rampart the black cannon
Hailed it with feverish lips.

Sandwich and Romney, Hastings, Hithe, and Dover
Were all alert that day,
To see the French war-steamers speeding over,
When the fog cleared away.

[1] **Cinque Ports**—Five ports on the south coast of England, whose duty it was to look after the coast defences. The name has long ceased to have any significance, although the honourary post of Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports is still filled.

Sullen and silent, and like couchant lions,
Their cannon, through the night,
Holding their breath, had watched, in grim defiance,
The sea-coast opposite.

And now they roared at drum-beat from their stations
On every citadel;
Each answering each, with morning salutations,
That all was well.

And down the coast, all taking up the burden,
Replied the distant forts,
As if to summon from his sleep the Warden [1]
And Lord of the Cinque Ports.

Him shall no sunshine from the fields of azure,
No drum-beat from the wall,
No morning gun from the black fort's embrasure,
Awaken with its call!

No more, surveying with an eye impartial
The long line of the coast,
Shall the gaunt figure of the old Field Marshal
Be seen upon his post!

For in the night, unseen, a single warrior,
In sombre harness mailed,
Dreaded of man, and surnamed the Destroyer,
The rampart wall had scaled.

He passed into the chamber of the sleeper,
The dark and silent room,
And as he entered, darker grew, and deeper,
The silence and the gloom.

[1] **Warden**—The Duke of Wellington, who died at Walmer Castle, the official residence of the Lord Warden, on September 13, 1852.

He did not pause to parley or dissemble,
But smote the Warden hoar;
Ah! what a blow! that made all England tremble
And groan from shore to shore.

Meanwhile, without, the surly cannon waited,
The sun rose bright o'erhead;
Nothing in Nature's aspect intimated
That a great man was dead.

THE BELEAGUERED CITY

I HAVE read, in some old, marvellous tale,
Some legend strange and vague,
That a midnight host of spectres pale
Beleaguered the walls of Prague.

Beside the Moldau's [1] rushing stream,
With the wan moon overhead,
There stood, as in an awful dream,
The army of the dead.

White as a sea-fog, landward bound,
The spectral camp was seen,
And, with a sorrowful, deep sound,
The river flowed between.

No other voice nor sound was there,
No drum, nor sentry's pace;
The mist-like banners clasped the air
As clouds with clouds embrace.

But when the old cathedral bell
Proclaimed the morning prayer,
The white pavilions rose and fell
On the alarmèd air.

[1] **Moldau**—A river in Bohemia flowing into the Elbe.

Down the broad valley fast and far
The troubled army fled;
Up rose the glorious morning star,
The ghastly host was dead.

I have read, in the marvellous heart of man,
That strange and mystic scroll,
That an army of phantoms vast and wan
Beleaguer the human soul.

Encamped beside Life's rushing stream,
In Fancy's misty light,
Gigantic shapes and shadows gleam
Portentous through the night.

Upon its midnight battle-ground
The spectral camp is seen,
And, with a sorrowful, deep sound,
Flows the River of Life between.

No other voice nor sound is there,
In the army of the grave;
No other challenge breaks the air;
But the rushing of Life's wave.

And when the solemn and deep church-bell
Entreats the soul to pray,
The midnight phantoms feel the spell,
The shadows sweep away.

Down the broad Vale of Tears afar
The spectral camp is fled;
Faith shineth as a morning star,
Our ghastly fears are dead.

THE BALLAD OF CARMILHAN

At Stralsund, by the Baltic sea,
Within the sandy bar,
At sunset of a summer's day,
Ready for sea, at anchor lay
The good ship Valdemar.

The sunbeams danced upon the waves,
And played along her side;
And through the cabin windows streamed
In ripples of golden light that seemed
The ripple of the tide.

There stood the captain with his friends,
Old skippers brown and hale,
Who smoked and grumbled o'er their grog,
And talked of icebergs and of fog,
Of calm and storm and gale.

And one was spinning a sailor's yarn
About Klaboterman,[1]
The Kobold of the sea; a spright
Invisible to mortal sight,
Who o'er the rigging ran.

Sometimes he hammered in the hold,
Sometimes upon the mast,
Sometimes abeam, sometimes abaft,
Or at the bows he sang and laughed,
And made all tight and fast.

[1] **Klaboterman**—A ship-goblin of the Baltic Sea. He is said to sail on a ship called *The Carmilhan*, dressed in yellow, wearing a night-cap and smoking a short pipe.

He helped the sailors at their work,
And toiled with jovial din;
He helped them hoist and reef the sails,
He helped them stow the casks and bales,
And heave the anchor in.

But woe unto the lazy louts,
The idlers of the crew;
Them to torment was his delight,
And worry them by day and night,
And pinch them black and blue.

And woe to him whose mortal eyes
Klaboterman behold,
It is a certain sign of death!—
The cabin-boy here held his breath,
He felt his blood run cold.

The jolly skipper paused awhile,
And then again began.
"There is a Spectre Ship," quoth he,
"A ship of the Dead that sails the sea,
And is called the Carmilhan.

"A ghostly ship with a ghostly crew
In tempests she appears;
And before the gale, or against the gale,
She sails without a rag of sail,
Without a helmsman steers.

"She haunts the Atlantic north and south
But mostly the mid-sea,
Where three great rocks rise bleak and bare
Like furnace chimneys in the air,
And are called the Chimneys Three.

"And ill betide the luckless ship
That meets the Carmilhan;
Over her decks the seas will leap,
She must go down into the deep,
And perish mouse and man."

The Captain of the Valdemar
Laughed loud with merry heart.
"I should like to see this ship," said he;
"I should like to find these Chimneys Three
That are marked down in the chart.

"I have sailed right over the spot," he said,
"With a good stiff breeze behind,
When the sea was blue, and the sky was clear,—
You can follow my course by these pinholes here,—
And never a rock could find."

And then he swore a dreadful oath,
He swore by the Kingdoms Three,
That, should he meet the Carmilhan,
He would run her down, although he ran
Right into Eternity!

All this while passing to and fro,
The cabin-boy had heard;
He lingered at the door to hear,
And drank in all with greedy ear,
And pondered every word.

He was a simple country lad,
But of a roving mind.
"Oh, it must be like heaven," thought he,
"Those far-off foreign lands to see,
And fortune seek and find!"

But in the fo'castle, when he heard
The mariners blaspheme,
He thought of home, he thought of God,
And his mother under the churchyard sod,
And wished it were a dream.

One friend on board that ship had he;
'Twas the Klaboterman,
Who saw the Bible in his chest,
And made a sign upon his breast,
All evil things to ban.

The cabin windows have grown blank
As eyeballs of the dead;
No more the glancing sunbeams burn
On the gilt letters of the stern,
But on the figure-head;

On Valdemar Victorious,
Who looketh with disdain
To see his image in the tide
Dismembered float from side to side,
And reunite again.

"It is the wind," those skippers said,
"That swings the vessel so;
It is the wind; it freshens fast,
'Tis time to say farewell at last,
'Tis time for us to go."

They shook the captain by the hand,
"Good luck! good luck!" they cried;
Each face was like the setting sun,
As, broad and red, they one by one
Went o'er the vessel's side.

The sun went down, the full moon rose
  Serene o'er field and flood,
And all the winding creeks and bays
And broad sea-meadows seemed ablaze,
  The sky was red as blood.

The southwest wind blew fresh and fair,
  As fair as wind could be;
Bound for Odessa, o'er the bar,
With all sail set, the Valdemar
  Went proudly out to sea.

The lovely moon climbs up the sky
  As one who walks in dreams;
A tower of marble in her light,
A wall of black, a wall of white,
  A stately vessel seems.

Low down upon the sandy coast
  The lights begin to burn;
And now, uplifted high in air,
They kindle with a fiercer glare,
  And now drop far astern.

The dawn appears, the land is gone,
  The sea is all around;
Then on each hand low hills of sand
Emerge and form another land;
  She steereth through the Sound.

Through Kattegat and Skagar-rack
  She flitteth like a ghost;
By day and night, by night and day,
She bounds, she flies upon her way
  Along the English coast.

Cape Finisterre is drawing near,
  Cape Finisterre is past;
Into the open ocean stream
She floats, the vision of a dream
  Too beautiful to last.

Suns rise and set, and rise, and yet
  There is no land in sight;
The liquid planets overhead
Burn brighter now the moon is dead,
  And longer stays the night.

And now along the horizon's edge
  Mountains of cloud uprose,
Black as with forests underneath,
Above, their sharp and jagged teeth
  Were white as drifted snows.

Unseen behind them sank the sun,
  But flushed each snowy peak
A little while with rosy light,
That faded slowly from the sight
  As blushes from the cheek.

Black grew the sky — all black, all black;
  The clouds were everywhere;
There was a feeling of suspense
In nature, a mysterious sense
  Of terror in the air.

And all on board the Valdemar
  Was still as still could be;
Save when the dismal ship-bell tolled,
As ever and anon she rolled,
  And lurched into the sea.

The captain up and down the deck
Went striding to and fro;
Now watched the compass at the wheel,
Now lifted up his hand to feel
Which way the wind might blow.

And now he looked up at the sails,
And now upon the deep;
In every fibre of his frame
He felt the storm before it came,
He had no thought of sleep.

Eight bells! and suddenly abaft,
With a great rush of rain,
Making the ocean white with spume,
In darkness like the day of doom,
On came the hurricane.

The lightning flashed from cloud to cloud,
And rent the sky in two;
A jagged flame, a single jet
Of white fire, like a bayonet,
That pierced the eyeballs through.

Then all around was dark again,
And blacker than before;
But in that single flash of light
He had beheld a fearful sight,
And thought of the oath he swore.

For right ahead lay the Ship of the Dead,
The ghostly Carmilhan:
Her masts were stripped, her yards were bare,
And on her bowsprit, poised in air,
Sat the Klaboterman.

Her crew of ghosts was all on deck
  Or clambering up the shrouds;
The boatswain's whistle, the captain's hail
Were like the piping of the gale,
  And thunder in the clouds.

And close behind the Carmilhan
  There rose up from the sea,
As from a foundered ship of stone,
Three bare and splintered masts alone:
  They were the Chimneys Three.

And onward dashed the Valdemar
  And leaped into the dark;
A denser mist, a colder blast,
A little shudder, and she had passed
  Right through the Phantom Bark.

She cleft in twain the shadowy hulk,
  But cleft it unaware;
As when, careening to her nest,
The sea-gull severs with her breast
  The unresisting air.

Again the lightning flashed; again
  They saw the Carmilhan,
Whole as before in hull and spar;
But now on board of the Valdemar
  Stood the Klaboterman.

And they all knew their doom was sealed,
  They knew that death was near;
Some prayed who never prayed before,
And some they wept, and some they swore,
  And some were mute with fear.

Then suddenly there came a shock,
And louder than wind or sea
A cry burst from the crew on deck,
As she dashed and crashed, a hopeless wreck,
Upon the Chimneys Three.

The storm and night were passed, the light
To streak the east began;
The cabin-boy, picked up at sea,
Survived the wreck, and only he,
To tell of the Carmilhan.

SANDALPHON

Have you read in the Talmud [1] of old,
In the legends the Rabbins have told
Of the limitless realm of the air,
Have you read it,—the marvellous story
Of Sandalphon, the Angel of Glory,
Sandalphon, the Angel of Prayer?

How, erect, at the outermost gates
Of the City Celestial he waits,
With his feet on the ladder of light,
That, crowded with angels unnumbered,
By Jacob was seen, as he slumbered
Alone in the desert at night?

The Angels of Wind and of Fire
Chant only one hymn, and expire
With the song's irresistible stress;
Expire in their rapture and wonder,
As harp-strings are broken asunder
By music they throb to express.

[1] **Talmud**—The exp[illegible] anatory book of the Jewish law.

But serene in the rapturous throng,
Unmoved by the rush of the song,
With eyes unimpassioned and slow,
Among the dead angels, the deathless
Sandalphon stands listening breathless
To sounds that ascend from below;—

From the spirits on earth that adore,
From the souls that entreat and implore
In the fervour and passion of prayer;
From the hearts that are broken with losses,
And weary with dragging the crosses
Too heavy for mortals to bear.

And he gathers the prayers as he stands,
And they change into flowers in his hands,
Into garlands of purple and red;
And beneath the great arch of the portal,
Through the streets of the City immortal
Is wafted the fragrance they shed.

It is but a legend, I know,—
A fable, a phantom, a show,
Of the ancient Rabbinical lore;
Yet the old mediæval tradition,
The beautiful, strange superstition,
But haunts me and holds me the more.

When I look from my window at night,
And the welkin above is all white,
All throbbing and panting with stars,
Among them majestic is standing
Sandalphon the angel, expanding
His pinions in nebulous bars.

And the legend, I feel, is a part
Of the hunger and thirst of the heart,
The frenzy and fire of the brain,
That grasps at the fruitage forbidden,
The golden pomegranates of Eden,
To quiet its fever and pain.

THE SPIRIT OF POETRY

THERE is a quiet spirit in these woods,
That dwells where'er the gentle south-wind blows;
Where, underneath the white-thorn in the glade,
The wild flowers bloom, or, kissing the soft air,
The leaves above their sunny palms outspread.
With what a tender and impassioned voice
It fills the nice and delicate ear of thought,
When the fast ushering star of morning comes
O'er-riding the gray hills with golden scarf;
Or when the cowled and dusky-sandaled Eve,
In mourning weeds, from out the western gate,
Departs with silent pace! That spirit moves
In the green valley, where the silver brook,
From its full laver, pours the white cascade;
And, babbling low amid the tangled woods,
Slips down through moss-grown stones with endless laughter.
And frequent, on the everlasting hills,
Its feet go forth, when it doth wrap itself
In all the dark embroidery of the storm,
And shouts the stern, strong wind. And here, amid
The silent majesty of these deep woods,
Its presence shall uplift thy thoughts from earth,
As to the sunshine and the pure, bright air
Their tops the green trees lift. Hence gifted bards
Have ever loved the calm and quiet shades,

For them there was an eloquent voice in all
The sylvan pomp of woods, the golden sun,
The flowers, the leaves, the river on its way,
Blue skies, and silver clouds, and gentle winds,
The swelling upland, where the sidelong sun
Aslant the wooded slope, at evening, goes,
Groves, through whose broken roof the sky looks in,
Mountain, and shattered cliff, and sunny vale,
The distant lake, fountains, and mighty trees,
In many a lazy syllable, repeating
Their old poetic legends to the wind.

And this is the sweet spirit that doth fill
The world; and, in these wayward days of youth,
My busy fancy oft embodies it,
As a bright image of the light and beauty
That dwell in nature,—of the heavenly forms
We worship in our dreams, and the soft hues
That stain the wild bird's wing, and flush the clouds
When the sun sets. Within her tender eye
The heaven of April, with its changing light,
And when it wears the blue of May, is hung,
And on her lip the rich, red rose. Her hair
Is like the summer tresses of the trees,
When twilight makes them brown, and on her cheek
Blushes the richness of an autumn sky,
With ever-shifting beauty. Then her breath,
It is so like the gentle air of Spring,
As, from the morning's dewy flowers, it comes
Full of their fragrance, that it is a joy
To have it round us,—and her silver voice
Is the rich music of a summer bird,
Heard in the still night, with its passionate cadence.

THE ARSENAL AT SPRINGFIELD

This is the Arsenal. From floor to ceiling,
Like a huge organ, rise the burnished arms;
But from their silent pipes no anthem pealing
Startles the villages with strange alarms.

Ah! what a sound will rise, how wild and dreary,
When the death-angel touches those swift keys!
What loud lament and dismal Miserere[1]
Will mingle with their awful symphonies!

I hear even now the infinite fierce chorus,
The cries of agony, the endless groan,
Which, through the ages that have gone before us,
In long reverberations reach our own.

On helm and harness rings the Saxon hammer,
Through Cimbric[2] forest roars the Norseman's song,
And loud amid the universal clamour,
O'er distant deserts sounds the Tartar gong.

I hear the Florentine, who from his palace
Wheels out his battle-bell with dreadful din,
And Aztec priests upon their teocallis[3]
Beat the wild war-drums made of serpent's skin;

The tumult of each sacked and burning village;
The shout that every prayer for mercy drowns;
The soldiers' revels in the midst of pillage;
The wail of famine in beleaguered towns;

[1] **Miserere**—The 51st Psalm is generally used in the Catholic liturgy for the sick and dying. The Psalm begins *Miserere mei Domine*, "Have mercy upon me, O Lord!"

[2] **Cimbric**—The Cimbri were an ancient people of Germany.

[3] **Teocallis**—An early Mexican temple.

The bursting shell, the gateway wrenched asunder,
The rattling musketry, the clashing blade;
And ever and anon, in tones of thunder
The diapason of the cannonade.

Is it, O man, with such discordant noises,
With such accursed instruments as these,
Thou drownest Nature's sweet and kindly voices,
And jarrest the celestial harmonies?

Were half the power, that fills the world with terror,
Were half the wealth, bestowed on camps and courts
Given to redeem the human mind from error,
There were no need of arsenals or forts:

The warrior's name would be a name abhorred!
And every nation, that should lift again
Its hand against a brother, on its forehead
Would wear forevermore the curse of Cain![1]

Down the dark future, through long generations,
The echoing sounds grow fainter and then cease;
And like a bell, with solemn, sweet vibrations,
I hear once more the voice of Christ say, "Peace!"

Peace! and no longer from its brazen portals
The blast of War's great organ shakes the skies!
But beautiful as songs of the immortals,
The holy melodies of love arise.

[1] **Curse of Cain**—*Genesis* IV, 15.

THE BIRDS OF KILLINGWORTH

It was in the season, when through all the land
The merle and mavis build, and building sing
Those lovely lyrics written by his hand,
Whom Saxon Cædmon [1] calls the Blithe-heart King;
When on the boughs the purple buds expand,
The banners of the vanguard of the Spring,
And rivulets, rejoicing, rush and leap,
And wave their fluttering signals from the steep.

The robin and the blue-bird piping loud,
Filled all the blossoming orchards with their glee;
The sparrows chirped as if they still were proud
Their race in Holy Writ [2] should mentioned be;
And hungry crows, assembled in a crowd,
Clamoured their piteous prayer incessantly,
Knowing who hears the raven's cry, and said:
"Give us, O Lord, this day, our daily bread!"

Across the Sound [3] the birds of passage sailed,
Speaking some unknown language strange and sweet
Of tropic isle remote, and pas ing hailed
The village with the cheers of all their fleet;
Or quarrelling together, laughed and railed
Like foreign soldiers, landed in the street
Of seaport town and with outlandish noise
Of oaths and gibberish, frightening girls and boys.

[1] **Cædmon**—The earliest poet of the Saxons. In his poem *Genesis* he speaks of God as "blithe of heart" after the creation of Adam and Eve.

[2] **Holy Writ**—*Matthew* x, 29-31.

[3] **The Sound**—If the Killingworth of this poem is to be taken as the Connecticut town of that name, then the reference here is to Long Island Sound.

Thus came the jocund Spring in Killingworth,
In fabulous days, some hundred years ago;
And thrifty farmers, as they tilled the earth,
Heard with alarm the cawing of the crow,
That mingled with the universal mirth,
Cassandra-like,[1] prognosticating woe;
They shook their heads, and doomed with dreadful words
To swift destruction the whole race of birds.

And a town-meeting was convened straightway
To set a price upon the guilty heads
Of these marauders, who, in lieu of pay,
Levied black-mail upon the garden beds
And corn-fields, and beheld without dismay
The awful scarecrow, with his fluttering shreds;
The skeleton that waited at their feast,
Whereby their sinful pleasure was increased.

Then from his house, a temple painted white,
With fluted columns, and a roof of red,
The Squire came forth, august and splendid sight!
Slowly descending with majestic tread,
Three flights of steps, nor looking left nor right,
Down the long street he walked, as one who said,
"A town that boasts inhabitants like me
Can have no lack of good society."

The Parson, too, appeared, a man austere,
The instinct of whose nature was to kill;
The wrath of God he preached from year to year,
And read, with fervour, Edwards on the Will;[2]

[1] **Cassandra-like**—Cassandra, the daughter of Priam, king of Troy, was endowed with the gift of prophecy, but it was fated that she should never be believed. She foretold the destruction of Troy, but was laughed at for her fears.

[2] **Edwards on the Will**—Jonathan Edwards, the famous New England divine who wrote *The Freedom of the Will*.

His favourite pastime was to slay the deer
In Summer on some Adirondac hill;
E'en now, while walking down the rural lane,
He lopped the wayside lilies with his cane.

From the Academy, whose belfry crowned
The hill of Science with its vane of brass,
Came the Preceptor, gazing idly round,
Now at the clouds, and now at the green grass,
And all absorbed in reveries profound
Of fair Almira in the upper class,
Who was, as in a sonnet he had said,
As pure as water, and as good as bread.

And next the Deacon issued from his door,
In his voluminous neck-cloth, white as snow;
A suit of sable bombazine he wore;
His form was ponderous, and his step was slow;
There never was so wise a man before;
He seemed the incarnate "Well, I told you so!"
And to perpetuate his great renown
There was a street named after him in town.

These came together in the new town hall,
With sundry farmers from the region round.
The Squire presided, dignified and tall,
His air impressive and his reasoning sound;
Ill fared it with the birds, both great and small;
Hardly a friend in all that crowd they found,
But enemies enough, who every one
Charged them with all the crimes beneath the sun.

When they had ended, from his place apart
Rose the Preceptor, to redress the wrong,
And, trembling like a steed before the start,
Looked round bewildered on the expectant throng;

Then thought of fair Almira, and took heart
To speak out what was in him, clear and strong,
Alike regardless of their smile or frown,
And quite determined not to be laughed down.

"Plato,[1] anticipating the Reviewers,
From his republic banished without pity
The Poets; in this little town of yours,
You put to death, by means of a Committee,
The ballad-singers and the Troubadours,[2]
The street-musicians of the heavenly city,
The birds, who make sweet music for us all
In our dark hours, as David did for Saul.

"The thrush that carols at the dawn of day
From the green steeples of the piny wood;
The oriole in the elm; the noisy jay,
Jargoning like a foreigner at his food;
The bluebird balanced on some topmost spray,
Flooding with melody the neighbourhood;
Linnet and meadow-lark, and all the throng
That dwell in nests, and have the gift of song.

"You slay them all! and wherefore? for the gain
Of a scant handful more or less of wheat,
Or rye, or barley, or some other grain,
Scratched up at random by industrious feet,
Searching for worm or weevil after rain!
Or a few cherries, that are not so sweet
As are the songs these uninvited guests
Sing at their feast with comfortable breasts.

[1] **Plato**—The Athenian philosopher, author of *The Republic*.

[2] **Troubadours**—The lyric poets of France during the Middle Ages.

"Do you ne'er think what wondrous beings these?
Do you ne'er think who made them, and who taught
The dialect they speak, where melodies
Alone are the interpreters of thought?
Whose household words are songs in many keys,
Sweeter than instrument of man e'er caught!
Whose habitations in the tree-tops even
Are half-way houses on the road to heaven!

"Think, every morning when the sun peeps through
The dim, leaf-latticed windows of the grove,
How jubilant the happy birds renew
Their old, melodious madrigals of love!
And when you think of this, remember too
'Tis always morning somewhere, and above
The awakening continents, from shore to shore,
Somewhere the birds are singing evermore.

"Think of your woods and orchards without birds!
Of empty nests that cling to boughs and beams
As in an idiot's brain remembered words
Hang empty 'mid the cobwebs of his dreams!
Will bleat of flocks or bellowing of herds
Make up for the lost music, when your teams
Drag home the stingy harvest, and no more
The feathered gleaners follow to your door?

"What! would you rather see the incessant stir
Of insects in the windrows of the hay,
And hear the locust and the grasshopper
Their melancholy hurdy-gurdies play?
Is this more pleasant to you than the whir
Of meadow-lark, and her sweet roundelay,
Or twitter of little field-fares, as you take
Your nooning in the shade of bush and brake?

"You call them thieves and pillagers; but know,
They are the winged wardens of your farms,
Who from the corn-fields drive the insidious foe,
And from your harvests keep a hundred harms;
Even the blackest of them all, the crow,
Renders good service as your man-at-arms,
Crushing the beetle in his coat of mail,
And crying havoc on the slug and snail.

"How can I teach your children gentleness,
And mercy to the weak, and reverence
For Life, which, in its weakness or excess,
Is still a gleam of God's omnipotence,
Or Death, which, seeming darkness, is no less
The selfsame light, although averted hence,
When by your laws, your actions, and your speech,
You contradict the very things I teach?"

With this he closed; and through the audience went
A murmur, like the rustle of dead leaves;
The farmers laughed and nodded, and some bent
Their yellow heads together like their sheaves;
Men have no faith in fine-spun sentiment
Who put their trust in bullocks and in beeves.
The birds were doomed; and, as the record shows,
A bounty offered for the heads of crows.

There was another audience out of reach,
Who had no voice nor vote in making laws,
But in the papers read his little speech,
And crowned his modest temples with applause;
They made him conscious, each one more than each,
He still was victor, vanquished in their cause.
Sweetest of all the applause he won from thee,
O fair Almira at the Academy!

And so the dreadful massacre began;
O'er fields and orchards, and o'er woodland crests,
The ceaseless fusillade of terror ran,
Dead fell the birds, with blood-stains on their breasts,
Or wounded crept away from sight of man,
While the young died of famine in their nests;
A slaughter to be told in groans, not words,
The very St. Bartholomew [1] of birds!

The summer came, and all the birds were dead;
The days were like hot coals; the very ground
Was burned to ashes; in the orchards fed
Myriads of caterpillars, and around
The cultivated fields and garden beds
Hosts of devouring insects crawled, and found
No foe to check their march, till they had made
The land a desert without leaf or shade.

Devour'd by worms, like Herod,[2] was the town,
Because, like Herod, it had ruthlessly
Slaughtered the Innocents. From the trees spun down
The canker-worms upon the passers-by,
Upon each woman's bonnet, shawl and gown,
Who shook them off with just a little cry;
They were the terror of each favourite walk,
The endless theme of all the village talk.

The farmers grew impatient, but a few
Confessed their error, and would not complain,
For, after all, the best thing one can do
When it is raining, is to let it rain.

[1] **St. Bartholemew**—The massacre of the French Huguenots in 1572. It is said that about 70,000 people were killed during the massacre.

[2] **Herod**—*Matthew* II, 16, and *Acts* XIII, 23. The Herod who was devoured, however, was a grandson of the Herod who ordered the massacre of the Innocents.

Then they repealed the law, although they knew
It would not call the dead to life again;
As school-boys, finding their mistake too late,
Draw a wet sponge across the accusing slate.

That year in Killingworth the Autumn came
Without the light of his majestic look,
The wonder of the falling tongues of flame,
The illumined [1] pages of his Doomsday book,
A few lost leaves blushed crimson with their shame,
And drowned themselves despairing in the brook,
While the wild wind went moaning everywhere,
Lamenting the dead children of the air!

But the next Spring a stranger sight was seen,
A sight that never yet by bard was sung,
As great a wonder as it would have been
If some dumb animal had found a tongue!
A wagon, overarched with evergreen,
Upon whose boughs were wicker cages hung,
All full of singing birds, came down the street,
Filling the air with music wild and sweet.

From all the country round these birds were brought,
By order of the town, with anxious quest,
And, loosened from their wicker prisons, sought
In woods and fields the places they loved best,
Singing loud canticles, which many thought
Were satires to the authorities addressed,
While others, listening in green lanes, averred
Such lovely music never had been heard!

But blither still and louder carolled they
Upon the morrow, for they seemed to know
It was the fair Almira's wedding-day,
And everywhere, around, above, below,

[1] **Illumined**—Decorated in colours.

When the Preceptor bore his bride away,
Their songs burst forth in joyous overflow,
And a new heaven bent over a new earth
Amid the sunny farms of Killingworth.

MAD RIVER

IN THE WHITE MOUNTAINS

TRAVELLER

Why dost thou wildly rush and roar,
Mad River, O Mad River?
Wilt thou not pause and cease to pour
Thy hurrying, headlong waters o'er
This rocky shelf forever?

What secret trouble stirs thy breast?
Why all this fret and flurry?
Dost thou not know that what is best
In this too restless world is rest
From over-work and worry?

THE RIVER

What wouldst thou in these mountains seek,
O stranger from the city?
Is it perhaps some foolish freak
Of thine, to put the words I speak
Into a plaintive ditty?

TRAVELLER

Yes; I would learn of thee thy song,
With all its flowing numbers,
And in a voice as fresh and strong
As thine is, sing it all day long,
And hear it in my slumbers.

THE RIVER

A brooklet nameless and unknown
Was I at first, resembling
A little child, that all alone
Comes venturing down the stairs of stone,
Irresolute and trembling.

Later, by wayward fancies led,
For the wide world I panted;
Out of the forest, dark and dread,
Across the open fields I fled,
Like one pursued and haunted.

I tossed my arms, I sang aloud,
My voice exultant blending
With thunder from the passing cloud,
The wind, the forest bent and bowed,
The rush of rain descending.

I heard the distant ocean call,
Imploring and entreating;
Drawn onward, o'er this rocky wall
I plunged, and the loud waterfall
Made answer to the greeting.

And now, beset with many ills,
A toilsome life I follow;
Compelled to carry from the hills
These logs to the impatient mills
Below there in the hollow.

Yet something ever cheers and charms
The rudeness of my labours;
Daily I water with these arms
The cattle of a hundred farms,
And have the birds for neighbours.

Men call me Mad, and well they may,
When, full of rage and trouble,
I burst my banks of sand and clay,
And sweep their wooden bridge away,
Like withered reeds or stubble.

Now go and write thy little rhyme,
As of thine own creating.
Thou seest the day is past its prime;
I can no longer waste my time;
The mills are tired of waiting.

THE LEGEND BEAUTIFUL

"HADST thou stayed, I must have fled!"
That is what the Vision said.

In his chamber all alone,
Kneeling on the floor of stone,
Prayed the Monk in deep contrition
For his sins of indecision,
Prayed for greater self-denial
In temptation and in trial;
It was noonday by the dial,
And the Monk was all alone.

Suddenly, as if it lightened,
An unwonted splendour brightened
All within him and without him
In that narrow cell of stone;
And he saw the Blessed Vision
Of our Lord, with light Elysian
Like a vesture wrapped about him,
Like a garment round him thrown.

Not as crucified and slain,
Not in agonies of pain,

Not with bleeding hands and feet,
Did the Monk his Master see;
But as in the village street,
In the house or harvest-field,
Halt and lame and blind he healed,
When he walked in Galilee.

In an attitude imploring,
Hands upon his bosom crossed,
Wondering, worshipping, adoring,
Knelt the Monk in rapture lost.
Lord, he thought, in heaven that reignest
Who am I, that thus thou deignest
To reveal thyself to me?
Who am I, that from the centre
Of thy glory thou shouldst enter
This poor cell, my guest to be?

Then amid his exaltation,
Loud the convent bell appalling,
From its belfry calling, calling,
Rang through court and corridor
With persistent iteration
He had never heard before.
It was now the appointed hour
When alike in shine or shower,
Winter's cold or summer's heat,
To the convent portals came
All the blind and halt and lame,
All the beggars of the street,
For their daily dole of food
Dealt them by the brotherhood;
And their almoner was he
Who upon his bended knee,
Rapt in silent ecstasy
Of divinest self-surrender,
Saw the Vision and the Splendour.

Deep distress and hesitation
Mingled with his adoration;
Should he go, or should he stay?
Should he leave the poor to wait
Hungry at the convent gate,
Till the Vision passed away?
Should he slight his radiant guest,
Slight his visitant celestial,
For a crowd of ragged, bestial
Beggars at the convent gate?
Would the Vision there remain?
Would the Vision come again?

Then a voice within his breast
Whispered, audible and clear,
As if to the outward ear:
"Do thy duty; that is best;
Leave unto thy Lord the rest!"

Straightway to his feet he started,
And with longing look intent
On the Blessed Vision bent,
Slowly from his cell departed,
Slowly on his errand went.

At the gate the poor were waiting,
Looking through the iron grating,
With that terror in the eye
That is only seen in those
Who amid their wants and woes
Hear the sound of doors that close,
And of feet that pass them by;
Grown familiar with disfavour,
Grown familiar with the savour
Of the bread by which men die!
But to-day, they knew not why,
Like the gate of Paradise

Seemed the convent gate to rise,
Like a sacrament divine
Seemed to them the bread and wine.
In his heart the Monk was praying,
Thinking of the homeless poor,
What they suffer and endure:
What we see not, what we see;
And the inward voice was saying:
"Whatsoever thing thou doest
To the least of mine and lowest,
That thou doest unto me!"

Unto me! but had the Vision
Come to him in beggar's clothing,
Come a mendicant imploring,
Would he then have knelt adoring,
Or have listened with derision,
And have turned away with loathing?

Thus his conscience put the question,
Full of troublesome suggestion,
As at length, with hurried pace,
Towards his cell he turned his face,
And beheld the convent bright
With a supernatural light,
Like a luminous cloud expanding
Over floor and wall and ceiling.

But he paused with awe-struck feeling
At the threshold of his door,
For the Vision still was standing
As he left it there before,
When the convent bell appalling,
From its belfry calling, calling,
Summoned him to feed the poor.
Through the long hour intervening
It had waited his return,

And he felt his bosom burn,
Comprehending all the meaning,
When the Blessed Vision said,
"Hadst thou stayed, I must have fled!"

CHARLEMAGNE[1]

OLGER[2] the Dane and Desiderio,
King of the Lombards, on a lofty tower
Stood gazing northward o'er the rolling plains,
League after league of harvests, to the foot
Of the snow-crested Alps, and saw approach
A mighty army, thronging all the roads
That led into the city. And the King
Said unto Olger, who had passed his youth
As hostage at the court of France, and knew
The Emperor's form and face: "Is Charlemagne
Among that host?" And Olger answered: "No."

And still the innumerable multitude
Flowed onward and increased, until the King
Cried in amazement: "Surely Charlemagne
Is coming in the midst of all these knights!"
And Olger answered slowly: "No; not yet;
He will not come so soon." Then much disturbed
King Desiderio asked: "What shall we do,
If he approach with a still greater army?"
And Olger answered: "When he shall appear,

[1] **Charlemagne**—Charles, the Great, of France, the founder of the Holy Roman Empire (742-800). Early in his reign he put aside his wife, the daughter of Desiderio, or Didier, King of the Lombards, and married a German Princess. Didier at once declared war, but was conquered and captured by Charlemagne. The Lombard king was imprisoned until his death.

[2] **Olger**—Olger, or Ogier, was one of the Paladins or Peers of Charlemagne.

You will behold what manner of man he is;
But what will then befall us I know not."

Then came the guard that never knew repose,
The Paladins of France; and at the sight
The Lombard King o'ercome with terror cried:
"This must be Charlemagne!" and as before
Did Olger answer: "No; not yet, not yet."

And then appeared in panoply complete
The Bishops and the Abbots and the Priests
Of the imperial chapel, and the Counts;
And Desiderio could no more endure
The light of day, nor yet encounter death,
But sobbed aloud and said: "Let us go down
And hide us in the bosom of the earth,
Far from the sight and anger of a foe
So terrible as this!" And Olger said:
"When you behold the harvests in the fields
Shaking with fear, the Po and the Ticino
Lashing the city walls with iron waves,
Then may you know that Charlemagne is come."
And even as he spake, in the northwest,
Lo! there uprose a black and threatening cloud,
Out of whose bosom flashed the light of arms
Upon the people pent up in the city;
A light more terrible than any darkness,
And Charlemagne appeared;— a Man of Iron!

His helmet was of iron, and his gloves
Of iron, and his breastplate and his greaves
And taslets were of iron, and his shield.
In his left hand he held an iron spear.
In his right hand his sword invincible.
The horse he rode on had the strength of iron
And colour of iron. All who went before him
Beside him and behind him, his whole host,

Were armed with iron, and their hearts within them
Were stronger than the armour that they wore.
The fields and all the roads were filled with iron,
And points of iron glistened in the sun
And shed a terror through the city streets.

This at a single glance Olger the Dane
Saw from the tower, and turning to the king
Exclaimed in haste: "Behold! this is the man
You looked for with such eagerness!" and then
Fell as one dead at Desiderio's feet.

SCANDERBERG[1]

THE battle is fought and won
By King Ladislaus the Hun,
In fire of hell and death's frost,
On the day of Pentecost.
And in rout before his path
From the field of battle red
Flee all that are not dead
Of the army of Amurath.

[1] **Scanderberg**—George Castriotes (1404-1468) had been sent in early youth as a hostage on behalf of Albania to Turkey. He rapidly rose in favour and gained the confidence of the Turkish Sultan, Murad or Amurath, who gave him the title of Iskander Bey, or Scanderberg. After the death of Scanderberg's father, Murad seized Albania and made it part of the Turkish dominions. This roused Scanderberg's wrath and he resolved to deliver his country from the Turks. Being sent against the Hungarians as second in command of the Turkish armies, he so managed matters that the Turks were defeated. Scanderberg fled from the field, and, on the way, meeting the Secretary of the Sultan, he compelled him to write an order to the Commander at Croia, directing him to deliver up the fortress. He then killed the Secretary in order to prevent discovery and obtained possession of the fortress. For seventeen years he led his countrymen in the war for their independence and defeated the Turks in many battles. At last peace was declared, the independence of Albania being acknowledged.

In the darkness of the night
Iskander, the pride and boast
Of that mighty Othman host,
With his routed Turks, takes flight
From the battle fought and lost
On the day of Pentecost;
Leaving behind him dead
The army of Amurath,
The vanguard as it led,
The rearguard as it fled,
Mown down in the bloody swath
Of the battle's aftermath.

But he cared not for Hospodars,[1]
Nor for Baron or Voivode,[2]
As on through the night he rode
And gazed at the fatal stars
That were shining overhead;
But smote his steed with his staff,
And smiled to himself, and said:
"This is the time to laugh."

In the middle of the night,
In a halt of the hurrying flight,
There came a Scribe of the King,
Wearing his signet ring,
And said in a voice severe;
"This is the first dark blot
On thy name, George Castriot!
Alas! why art thou here,
And the army of Amurath slain,
And left on the battle plain?"

[1] **Hospodars**—Hospodar was a title of dignity. It is still used by the Czar of Russia.

[2] **Voivode**—A title of dignity applied usually to the leader of an army or the ruler of a province.

And Iskander answered and said;
"They lie on the bloody sod
By the hoofs of horses trod;
But this was the decree
Of the watchers overhead;
For the war belongeth to God,
And in battle who are we,
Who are we, that shall withstand
The wind of his lifted hand?"

Then he bade them bind with chains
This man of books and brains;
And the Scribe said: "What misdeed
Have I done, that, without need,
Thou doest to me this thing?"
And Iskander answering
Said unto him: "Not one
Misdeed to me hast thou done;
But for fear that thou shouldst run
And hide thyself from me,
Have I done this unto thee.

"Now write me a writing, O Scribe,
And a blessing be on thy tribe!
A writing sealed with thy ring,
To King Amurath's Pasha
In the City of Croia,[1]
The city moated and walled,
That he surrender the same
In the name of my master, the King;
For what is writ in his name
Can never be recalled."

And the Scribe bowed low in dread,
And unto Iskander said:
"Allah is great and just,

[1] **Croia**—Kroia or Kruia, near the coast in Albania.

We are but ashes and dust;
How shall I do this thing,
When I know that my guilty head
Will be forfeit to the King?''

Then swift as a shooting star
The curved and shining blade
Of Iskander's scimitar
From its sheath, with jewels bright,
Shot, as he thundered: ''Write!''
And the trembling Scribe obeyed,
And wrote in the fitful glare
Of the bivouac fire apart,
With the chill of the midnight air
On his forehead white and bare,
And the chill of death in his heart.

Then again Iskander cried;
''Now follow whither I ride,
For here thou must not stay.
Thou shalt be as my dearest friend,
And honours without end
Shall surround thee on every side,
And attend thee night and day.''
But the sullen Scribe replied:
''Our pathways here divide;
Mine leadeth not thy way.''

And even as he spoke
Fell a sudden scimitar stroke,
When no one else was near;
And the Scribe sank to the ground,
As a stone, pushed from the brink
Of a black pool, might sink
With a sob and disappear;
And no one saw the deed;
And in the stillness around

No sound was heard but the sound
Of the hoofs of Iskander's steed,
As forward he sprang with a bound.

Then onward he rode and afar,
With scarce three hundred men,
Through river and forest and fen,
O'er the mountains of Argentar;
And his heart was merry within,
When he crossed the river Drin,
And saw in the gleam of the morn
The White Castle Ak-Hissar,
The city Croia called,
The city moated and walled,
The city where he was born,—
And above it the morning star.

Then his trumpeters in the van
On their silver bugles blew,
And in crowds about him ran
Albanian and Turkoman,
That the sound together drew.
And he feasted with his friends,
And when they were warm with wine,
He said: "O friends of mine,
Behold what fortune sends,
And what the fates design!
King Amurath commands
That my father's wide domain,
This city and all its lands,
Shall be given to me again."

Then to the Castle White
He rode in regal state,
And entered in at the gate
In all his arms bedight,
And gave to the Pasha

Who ruled in Croia
The writing of the King,
Sealed with his signet ring.
And the Pasha bowed his head,
And after a silence said:
"Allah is just and great!
I yield to the will divine:
The city and lands are thine;
Who shall contend with fate?"

Anon from the castle walls
The crescent banner falls,
And the crowd beholds instead,
Like a portent in the sky,
Iskander's banner fly,
The Black Eagle with double head;
And a shout ascends on high,
For men's souls are tired of the Turks,
And their wicked ways and works,
That have made of Ak-Hissar
A city of the plague;
And the loud, exultant cry
That echoes wide and far
Is: "Long live Scanderberg!"

It was thus Iskander came
Once more unto his own;
And the tidings, like the flame
Of a conflagration blown
By the winds of summer, ran,
Till the land was in a blaze,
And the cities far and near,
Sayeth Ben Joshua Ben Meir,
In his Book of the Words of the Days,
"Were taken as a man
Would take the tip of his ear."

THE INDIAN HUNTER

When the summer harvest was gathered in,
And the sheaf of the gleaner grew white and thin,
And the ploughshare was in its furrow left,
Where the stubble land had been lately cleft,
An Indian hunter, with unstrung bow,
Looked down where the valley lay stretched below.

He was a stranger there, and all that day
Had been out on the hills, a perilous way,
But the foot of the deer was far and fleet,
And the wolf kept aloof from the hunter's feet,
And bitter feelings passed o'er him then,
As he stood by the populous haunts of men.

The winds of autumn came over the woods,
As the sun stole out from their solitudes;
The moss was white on the maple's trunk,
And dead from its arms the pale vine shrunk,
And ripened the mellow fruit hung, and red
Where the trees withered leaves around it shed.

The foot of the reaper moved slow on the lawn,
And the sickle cut down the yellow corn;
The mower sung loud by the meadow side,
Where the mists of evening were spreading wide;
And the voice of the herdsman came up the lea,
And the dance went round by the greenwood tree.

Then the hunter turned away from that scene,
Where the home of his fathers once had been,
And heard, by the distant and measured stroke,
That the woodman hewed down the giant oak —
And burning thoughts flashed over his mind,
Of the white man's faith, and love unkind.

The moon of the harvest grew high and bright,
As her golden horn pierced the cloud of white,—
A footstep was heard in the rustling brake,
Where the beech overshadowed the misty lake,
And a mourning voice, and a plunge from shore,
And the hunter was seen on the hills no more.

When years had passed on, by that still lake side,
The fisher looked down through the silver tide,
And there, on the smooth yellow sand displayed,
A skeleton wasted and white was laid,
And 'twas seen, as the waters moved deep and slow
That the hand was still grasping a hunter's bow.

TEGNER'S[1] DRAPA[2]

I HEARD a voice that cried
"Balder[3] the Beautiful
Is dead, is dead!"

[1] **Tegner**—A Swedish poet (1782-1846). His most celebrated work, *Frithiof's Saga*, a combination of ballads, has frequently been translated into English.

[2] **Drapa**—Death-song or dirge.

[3] **Balder**—A northern divinity, the son of Odin, the ruler of the Asas, or gods, and of Trigg his wife. He is the personification of light, the light of the sun. He was tormented with dreams which showed him that his life was in great danger, and, assembling the gods, he told them of his troubles. His mother, in great distress, exacted an oath from all things on earth and heaven and in the water that they would not harm Balder. The only thing she neglected was the mistletoe, as she thought this plant too insignificant to do any harm. Loki, the evil spirit among the gods, the personification of fire, found this out by means of a trick and, plucking a piece of mistletoe, he handed it to the blind old god, Hœder, the personification of winter, who was standing by while the other gods were amusing themselves hurling weapons and rocks at Balder, who of course was unharmed. Hœder, in ignorance of the harm that would befall, threw the mistletoe at Balder who fell pierced through and through by the sprig. He was buried amidst the lamentations of the gods and all created things.

And through the misty air
Passed like the mournful cry
Of sunward sailing cranes.

I saw the pallid corpse
Of the dead sun
Borne through the Northern sky.
Blasts from Niffelheim[1]
Lifted the shrouded mists
Around him as he passed.

And the voice forever cried,
"Balder the Beautiful
Is dead, is dead!"
And died away
Through the dreary night,
In accents of despair.

Balder the Beautiful,
God of the summer sun,
Fairest of all the Gods!
Light from his forehead beamed,
Runes were upon his tongue,
As on the warrior's sword.

All things in earth and air
Bound were by magic spell
Never to do him harm;
Even the plants and stones,
All save the mistletoe,
The sacred mistletoe!

Hœder, the blind old God,
Whose feet are shod with silence,
Pierced through that gentle breast

[1] **Niffelheim**—The world of fog and mist that existed before the creation of the earth.

With his sharp spear, by fraud
Made of the mistletoe,
The accursed mistletoe!

They laid him in his ship,
With horse and harness,
As on a funeral pyre.
Odin placed
A ring upon his finger,
And whispered in his ear.

They launched the burning ship!
It floated far away
Over the misty sea,
Till like the sun it seemed,
Sinking beneath the waves.
Balder returned no more!

So perish the old Gods![1]
But out of the sea of Time
Rises a new land of song,
Fairer than the old.
Over its meadows green
Walk the young bards and sing.

Build it again
O ye bards,
Fairer than before!
Ye fathers of the new race,
Feed upon morning dew,
Sing the new Song of Love!

The law of force is dead!
The law of love prevails!

[1] **The old Gods**—After the death of Odin and Thor and the older gods in the last great conflict with the powers of evil, Balder will arise and rule over a regenerated world.

Thor,[1] the thunderer,
Shall rule the earth no more,
No more, with threats,
Challenge[2] the meek Christ.

Sing no more,
O ye bards of the North,
Of Vikings and of Jarls!
Of the days of Eld
Preserve the freedom only,
Not the deeds of blood.

CASTLES IN SPAIN

How much of my young heart, O Spain,
Went out to thee in days of yore!
What dreams romantic filled my brain,
And summoned back to life again
The Paladins of Charlemain,[3]
The Cid Campeador![4]

And shapes more shadowy than these,
In the dim twilight half revealed:
Phœnician galleys on the seas,
The Roman camps like hives of bees,
The Goth uplifting from his knees
Pelayo[5] on his shield.

[1] **Thor**—The God of Thunder, the mighty one among the Norse Gods.

[2] **Challenge**—See Longfellow's *The Saga of King Olaf*.

[3] **Charlemain**—In 788 Charlemagne or Charlemain invaded Spain. He was successful, but on the return journey his rear guard, commanded by the famous Paladin, Roland, was treacherously attacked at Roncesvalles in the Pyrenees and annihilated.

[4] **The Cid**—Rodrigue Diaz de Bivar (1030-1099) the half-legendary hero of early Spanish history. Cid means *lord* and Campeador *hero of the camp*.

[5] **Pelayo**—The successor of Roderick, the last of the Gothic kings, and the founder of the Spanish monarchy.

It was these memories perchance,
From annals of remotest eld,
That lent the colours of romance
To every trivial circumstance,
And changed the form and countenance
Of all that I beheld.

Old towns, whose history lies hid
In monkish chronicle or rhyme,—
Burgos, the birthplace of the Cid,
Zamora and Valladolid,
Toledo, built and walled amid
The wars of Wamba's[1] time;

The long straight line of the highway,
The distant town that seems so near,
The peasants in the fields, that stay
Their toil to cross themselves and pray,
When from the belfry at midday
The Angelus[2] they hear;

The crosses in the mountain pass,
Mules gay with tassels, the loud din
Of muleteers, the tethered ass
That crops the dusty wayside grass,
And cavaliers with spurs of brass
Alighting at the inn;

White hamlets hidden in fields of wheat,
White cities slumbering by the sea,
White sunshine flooding square and street,
Dark mountain-ranges, at whose feet
The river-beds are dry with heat,
All was a dream to me.

[1] **Wamba**—A king of the Visigoths in Spain during the seventh century.

[2] **Angelus**—*See page* 87.

Yet something sombre and severe
O'er the enchanted landscape reigned;
A terror in the atmosphere
As if King Philip listened near,
Or Torquemada,[1] the austere,
His ghostly sway maintained.

The softer Andalusian skies
Dispelled the sadness and the gloom;
There Cadiz by the seaside lies,
And Seville's orange-orchards rise,
Making the land a paradise
Of beauty and of bloom.

There Cordova is hidden among
The palm, the olive, and the vine;
Gem of the South, by poets sung,
And in whose Mosque Almanzor[2] hung
As lamps the bells that once had rung
At Compostella's shrine.[3]

But over all the rest supreme,
The star of stars, the cynosure,
The artist's and the poet's theme,
The young man's vision, the old man's dream,—
Granada[4] by its winding stream,
The City of the Moor!

[1] **Torquemada**—(1420-1498). The Grand Inquisitor in Spain.

[2] **Almanzor**—A celebrated Moorish general of the tenth and eleventh centuries. He won many victories over the Christians.

[3] **Compostella's shrine**—Santiago de Compostella, a Spanish city, famous as containing the relics of Saint James the Great.

[4] **Granada**—The ancient capital of the Moorish kingdom of Granada in Spain, situated on the River Jenil, or Xenil.

And there the Alhambra[1] still recalls
Aladdin's palace of delight.
Allah il Allah![2] through its halls
Whispers the fountain as it falls;
The Darro darts beneath its walls,
The hills with snow are white.

Ah yes, the hills are white with snow,
And cold with blasts that bite and freeze;
But in the happy vale below
The orange and pomegranate grow,
And wafts of air toss to and fro
The blossoming almond-trees.

The Vega cleft by the Xenil,
The fascination and allure
Of the sweet landscape chain the will.
The traveller lingers on the hill,
His parted lips are breathing still
The last sigh[3] of the Moor.

How like a ruin overgrown
With flowers that hide the rents of time,

[1] **Alhambra**—The palace of the Moorish kings of Granada. "Everything contributed to render the whole the most splendid abode of oriental magnificence, to which only the fantastic creations of the Arabian Nights can be fitly compared."

[2] **Allah**—The Mohammedan name for God.

[3] **The last sigh**—"There, at Padul, on a spur of the Alpujarras, Bobadil, the last of the Moorish kings, stood and gazed back upon the kingdom he had lost, the beautiful Vega, the towers of the Alhambra and the gardens of the Generalife; all the beauty and magnificence of his lost home. 'Allahu Akbar,' he said, 'God is most great,' as he burst into tears. His mother Ayesha stood beside him: 'You may well weep like a woman,' she said, 'for what you could not defend like a man.' The spot whence Bobadil took his sad farewell look at his city from which he was banished forever bears to this day the name 'el ultimo sospiro del Moro,' 'the last sigh of the Moor.'"—Poole's *The Story of the Moors*.

Stands now the Past that I have known;
Castles in Spain, not built of stone,
But of white summer cloud, and blown
Into this little mist of rhyme!

SAND OF THE DESERT IN AN HOUR-GLASS

A HANDFUL of red sand from the hot clime
Of Arab deserts brought,
Within this glass becomes the spy of Time,
The minister of Thought.

How many weary centuries has it been
About those deserts blown!
How many strange vicissitudes has seen,
How many histories known!

Perhaps the camels of the Ishmaelite
Trampled and passed it o'er,
When into Egypt from the patriarch's sight
His favourite son they bore.

Perhaps the feet of Moses, burnt and bare,
Crushed it beneath their tread;
Or Pharaoh's flashing wheels into the air
Scattered it as they sped;

Or Mary, with the Christ of Nazareth
Held close in her caress,
Whose pilgrimage of hope and love and faith
Illumed the wilderness;

Or anchorites beneath Engaddi's[1] palms
Pacing the Dead Sea beach,

[1] **Engaddi**—Engaddi, or Engedi, is situated on the western shore of the Dead Sea about 26 miles from Jerusalem. It is a desert place and abounds in caverns.

And singing slow their old Armenian psalms
In half-articulate speech;

Or caravans, that from Bassora's[1] gate
With westward steps depart;
Or Mecca's pilgrims,[2] confident of Fate,
And resolute in heart!

These have passed over it, or may have passed;
Now in this crystal tower
Imprisoned by some curious hand at last,
It counts the passing hour.

And as I gaze, these narrow walls expand:—
Before my dreamy eye
Stretches the desert with its shifting sand,
Its unimpeded sky.

And borne aloft by the sustaining blast,
This little golden thread
Dilates into a column high and vast,
A form of fear and dread.

And onward, and across the setting sun,
Across the boundless plain,
The column and its broader shadow run,
Till thought pursues in vain.

The vision vanishes! These walls again
Shut out the lurid sun,
Shut out the hot immeasurable plain,
The half-hour's sand is run!

[1] **Bassora**—A centre of eastern trade founded in 632. It is in Turkey-in-Asia, about 50 miles from the Persian gulf.

[2] **Mecca's pilgrims**—Pilgrims of the Mohammedan faith on their way to Mecca, the sacred city of their religion and the birthplace of Mohammed.

ENCELADUS[1]

Under Mount Etna he lies,
  It is slumber, it is not death;
For he struggles at times to arise,
And above him the lurid skies
  Are hot with his fiery breath.

The crags are piled on his breast,
  The earth is heaped on his head;
But the groans of his wild unrest,
Though smothered and half suppressed,
  Are heard, and he is not dead.

And the nations far away
  Are watching with eager eyes;
They talk together and say,
"To-morrow, perhaps to-day,
  Enceladus will arise!"

And the old gods, the austere
  Oppressors in their strength,
Stand aghast and white with fear
At the ominous sounds they hear,
  And tremble, and mutter, "At length!"

Ah me! for the land that is sown
  With the harvest of despair,
Where the burning cinders, blown
From the lips of the overthrown
  Enceladus, fill the air.

Where ashes are heaped in drifts
  Over vineyard and field and town,
Whenever he starts and lifts
His head through the blackened rifts
  Of the crags that keep him down.

[1] **Enceladus**—*See page* 84.

See, see! the red light shines!
'Tis the glare of his awful eyes!
And the storm-wind shouts through the pines
Of Alps and Apennines,
"Enceladus, arise!"

ROBERT BURNS

I SEE amid the fields of Ayr
A ploughman, who in foul or fair
Sings at his task.
So clear we know not if it is
The laverock's song we hear or his,
Nor care to ask.

For him the ploughing of those fields
A more ethereal harvest yields
Than sheaves of grain:
Songs flush with purple bloom the rye;
The plover's call, the curlew's cry,
Sing in his brain.

Touched by his hand, the wayside weed
Becomes a flower; the lowliest reed
Beside the stream
Is clothed with beauty; gorse and grass
And heather, where his footsteps pass,
The brighter seem.

He sings of love, whose flame illumes
The darkness of lone cottage rooms;
He feels the force,
The treacherous under-tow and stress,
Of wayward passions, and no less
The keen remorse.

At moments, wrestling with his fate,
His voice is harsh, but not with hate;
The brush-wood hung
Above the tavern door lets fall
Its bitter leaf, its drop of gall,
Upon his tongue.

But still the burden of his song
Is love of right, disdain of wrong;
Its master chords
Are Manhood, Freedom, Brotherhood;
Its discord but an interlude
Between the words.

And then to die so young, and leave
Unfinished what he might achieve!
Yet better sure
Is this than wandering up and down,
An old man, in a country town,
Infirm and poor.

For now he haunts his native land
As an immortal youth; his hand
Guides every plough;
He sits beside each ingle-nook;
His voice is in each rushing brook,
Each rustling bough.

His presence haunts this room to-night,
A form of mingled mist and light,
From that far coast.
Welcome beneath this roof of mine!
Welcome! this vacant chair is thine,
Dear guest and ghost!

BIRDS OF PASSAGE

Black shadows fall
From the lindens tall,
That lift aloft their massive wall
  Against the southern sky;

And from the realms
Of the shadowy elms
A tide-like darkness overwhelms
  The fields that round us lie.

But the night is fair,
And everywhere
A warm, soft vapour fills the air,
  And distant sounds seem near;

And above, in the light
Of the star-lit night,
Swift birds of passage wing their flight
  Through the dewy atmosphere.

I hear the beat
Of their pinions fleet,
As from the land of snow and sleet
  They seek a southern lea.

I hear the cry
Of their voices high
Falling dreamily through the sky,
  But their forms I cannot see.

O, say not so!
Those sounds that flow
In murmurs of delight and woe
  Come not from wings of birds.

They are the throngs
Of the poet's songs,
Murmurs of pleasures, and pains, and wrongs,
The sounds of wingèd words.

This is the cry
Of souls, that high
On toiling, beating pinions, fly,
Seeking a warmer clime.

From their distant flight
Through realms of light
It falls into our world of night,
With the murmuring sound of rhyme.

Selections from the Riverside Literature Series

Supervising Editor, Horace E. Scudder, 1886-1901
Succeeded by Bliss Perry

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